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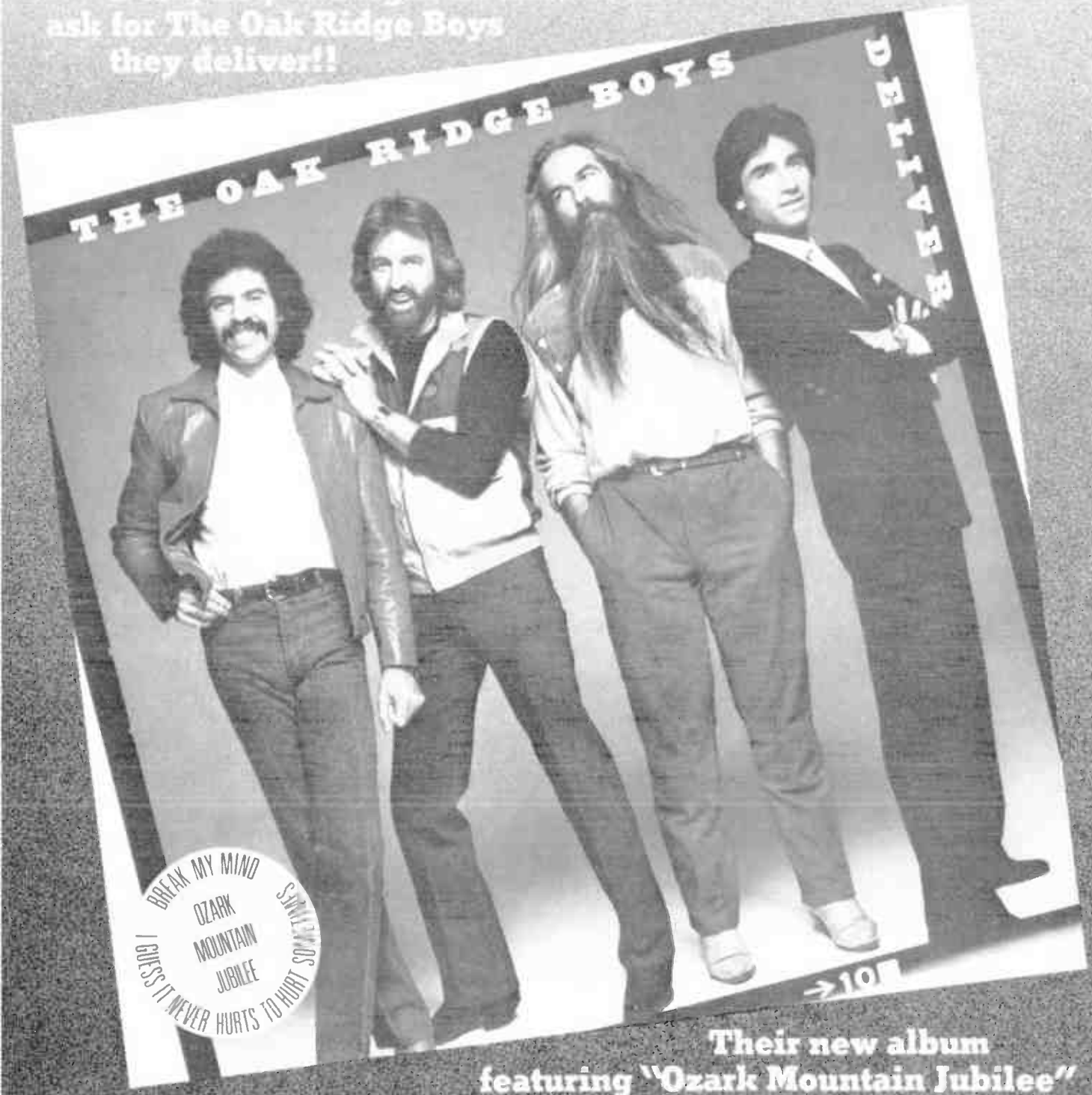

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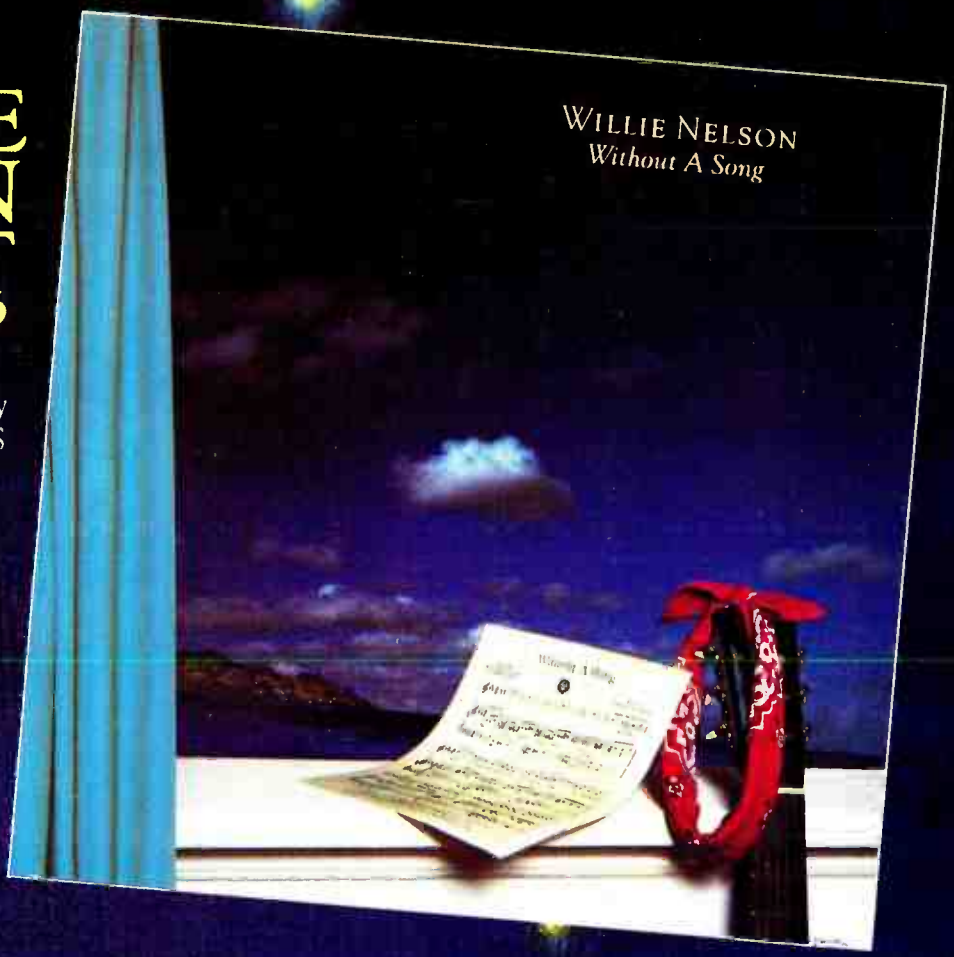

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(FC 39110)

NUMBER 104, NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1983

COUNTRY MUSIC™

Cover photograph by Leonard Kamsler

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to sleep." The listeners had an opportunity to write in and give their solution. The grand prize winner received a $300 Hunter ceiling fan or a waterbed valued at $250-$300. Other prizes were a **Louise Mandrell** *Too Hot To Sleep* cassette and poster.

Look for **Leon Everette** on Coca Cola TV commercials. According to the advertising agency organizing production, the theme of the commercial is having a country picnic. Coca Cola has purchased 500 Leon Everette albums to be given out to the first 500 people who show up for the filming.

New Additions

The Oak Ridge Boys have broken ground on a new addition to their studio. The 1400-square-foot addition will have a new control room and new console. Other revisions include a new name. The studio will now be called Acorn Sound Recorders, Inc.

When it Rains It Floods

Ed Bruce got some unexpected time off when he was rained out at an *indoor* concert. After driving 14 hours from Oklahoma City to perform at Gilley's Club in the Houston area, he found that hurricane rains had flooded the club.

If You're Traveling

There's certainly no lack of things to see in Nashville. Newest is The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum's **Country Music and The Movies** exhibit. The presentation includes audio/video clips of vintage films and box office hits, posters and other film paraphernalia. Films showcased include oldies like **Gene Autry's** *Singing Cowboy* and contemporary films like *Urban Cowboy* and *Coal Miner's Daughter*.

There's also a new branch of Nashville's First American Bank that deals exclusively in financing music industry businesses. We don't know if tours are available now, but when it opened **Mayor Richard Fulton** and **Richard Sterban** of the Oaks were among others who took a tour of the new offices.

If you happen to be in Alabama, you may get a chance to see The Alabama Music Hall of Fame. Naturally the group **Alabama** are big supporters of the facility. The $2 million project will house a library, exhibition hall, auditorium and simulated recording studio. **Randy Owen** was a speaker at the recent press conference that announced the opening of the Hall of Fame, which will honor music people who are Alabama natives.

Tammy Gives Aid to a Doctor

As part of a unique musical fund raising drive to aid the Seattle, Washington school district's scholarship program. **Tammy Wynette** volunteered to sing a cut on *Let's All Pull Together*, an album which teamed her up with **Dr. Donald Steele**, the superintendent of schools there. Dr. Steele conceived of the album as a means to provide a scholarship base for needy high school seniors in his district. Produced by **Jerry Taylor**, a songwriter for Tammy's music publishing company, and **Dennis Knutson** of Merit Music, the album contains ten original songs co-written by the two men. The writers and their publishing companies have declined royalty payments on the project, and **Roy Clark**, who owns the Sound Emporium, where the album was recorded, provided the facility at a minimal charge. According to Taylor and Knutson, some of the industry's finest musicians played on the session at a fee less than they would normally command. Local corporations, including Boeing, Chevron, PEMCO, Alpac, ARA Transportation and Safeway, heard of the proposal and donated some $25,000 toward the making of the album.

Everyone involved in the project is excited about the idea, especially Tammy: "I'm the mother of four girls and I know what being a concerned parent is all about," said Tammy. "Education has always been important in my mind, and I believe it should be equal for everyone who wants it and works for it. Scholarship money is becoming harder to get, so I'm glad for this chance to help with Dr. Steele's project."

Can't Keep A Good Boy Down

The **Ted Nugent** of country did it again. While performing at an outdoor concert in Rhineland, Wisconsin, **Leon Everette** was asked to stay on for another day. It seems that the boy was in the audience more than on stage and the Texas Production company TV cameras couldn't keep up with him, so they needed more time to get a proper shooting.

Music By Any Other Name

Chet Atkins teamed up with French guitarist **Marcel Dadi** for a nine-city tour of Europe, including France, Belgium, Norway, England, with TV appearances in France and Germany. Atkins has performed with Dadi several times before at the Olympia Theatre in Paris. He and Dadi got together a few days ahead of the tour to learn each other's material. The two-man show consisted of Chet and Dadi playing together and proved that there is no barrier when it comes to music. After the tour, Chet conducted a guitar seminar for the Chet Atkins Guitar Appreciation Society, a three-year-old fan club organization based in London.

Johnny Lee participated in the Ken-

(Continued on page 10)

Love and Family

Events in his own career and tributes to his father, **Marty Robbins**, who died last December, kept **Ronny Robbins** hopping this fall. Early in September, "*Yesteryear in Nashville*" (TNN) put Ronny on TV sharing memories and filmclips of Marty. A week later Ronny was wiping concrete off his hands and feet after setting his handprints and footprints in the sidewalk outside the Nashville Wax Museum, just before appearing on The Nashville Network's "*Nashville Now*" (TNN), broadcast live from the Gaslight Theater in Opryland Park. More heavy work later the same month when Ronny took the shovel and broke ground for the Marty Robbins Museum at Music Village, U.S.A. in Hendersonville, Tennessee.

After fifteen years as a single act, Ronny started touring with his daddy's band last February. They played a heavy schedule this summer, more than 40 dates in July, August and September. **Don Winters**, one of the long-time members of Marty's organization, does backround vocals for the band. Then there's **Larry Hunt** on bass, **Katz Kobayashi** on steel, **Jim Hannaford** on keyboards, **Roger Waters**, a new man, on drums. **Jack Pruett** plays lead guitar. Ronny's the featured vocalist.

Working with the band has been satisfying for them all, Ronny told *Country Music* recently, but some of the tributes to his daddy have been hard, emotionally hard. "I lost a lot more than just Marty Robbins," Ronny said. "For me, it was not just a professional loss. It was personal. The fans can find somebody else to listen to. I lost my father and that's a one-time thing. We had so much. That's what I'm grateful for, the time we had together as a family unit." Not everyone has that, and Ronny agreed. "Especially in show business," he said. "I could never feel cheated. Even though Daddy died at a relatively young age, we had time together, quality time."

Familiar Faces in Familiar Places

Since midsummer, some of country music's best-known faces have been appearing in fancy places: the covers and pages of other national and local magazines. **Crystal Gayle**, new mother of **Catherine Claire**, was named "One of America's 10 Most Beautiful Women" in August's *Harpers Bazaar*. August also found **Willie Nelson**, his wife **Connie**, and their two daughters on the cover of *Life*. Inside, a feature article on the family's homes in Texas and Colorado. One especially candid photo of Willie, daughter **Amy**, and Connie in the Learjet between homes portrays a strong family feeling. **Paula**, the older daughter, stated, "The plane makes a difference. Dad gets home more, and we go to Texas a lot when we're not in school." **Kenny Rogers**, on the cover of *People* August 22nd, discussed family life and staying together in a feature article that included news about the filming of *Kenny Rogers as The Gambler, Part II* and remarks about various houses he owns. *The Gambler II* does not include love scenes with **Linda Evans**. As Kenny told writer **Jim Jerome**, "So many marriages in Hollywood break up because of leading men and leading ladies. That must be a tremendous temptation. The bottom line, in order for it to *look* believable, is there's *got* to be stimulation and motivation. That's potentially destructive at home. . . . I've been married three times before and more than anything else in the world I want this one to work out. It's just not fair to put it in jeopardy." Kenny and his wife **Marianne** plan to sell their three Los Angeles homes, including the Dino DeLaurentis estate in Beverly Hills where they have never lived, and bring up their son **Christopher** on the ranch near Athens, Georgia. Another home, **Barbara Mandrell** and husband **Ken Dudney's** in Hendersonville, Tennessee, was on view in September's *Nashville!* Magazine. The red dining room, the stenciled oak floors, the views out to the lake, look lovely. Interior designer **Tish Hooker** worked with Barbara on the house. She has also done Barbara and Ken's bus and yacht. She would like to get the contract to do Ken's helicopter. Discussing the overall "look" of homes in the same issue of *Nashville!*, Tish Hooker wrote, "In these structured times, we're told what's expected of us in all aspects of our lives. But home is where we can have the greatest freedom. Just because your home isn't large or impressive doesn't mean that it isn't special. The quality comes when the home carries the special mark of the people who inhabit it." *Nashville!* then featured **T.G. Sheppard's** home, decorated by his wife **Diana**, in their October issue. Later this season, **Louise Mandrell** and husband **R.C. Bannon's** home will be photographed for all to see and enjoy in the December issue of *Ladies Home Journal*.

Bruce Boxleitner, Kenny, and Linda Evans.

Entertainment Expo 83

The Nashville Music Association's Entertainment Expo '83 was scheduled to open November 18 in Nashville, as *Country Music* Magazine went to press. Last year's Expo '82 attracted over 14,000 people to the Municipal Auditorium for its three-day run, and exhibits were thronged. Record companies, publishers, recording studios, film and video companies and many others offering services of various kinds to Nashville's entertainment industry participated in last year's Expo. Monument Records, Combine Music, Al Jolson Enterprises and Fanta Sound were honored for best booths. Exhibitors booked space well in advance for this year's event.

A variety of Nashville entertainers were scheduled to perform Friday, Saturday and Sunday, ranging from contemporary/pop through "country-flavored," rock, classical and gospel music, and dance and comedy groups. **The Oak Ridge Boys' William Lee Golden** and **Charlie Daniels** served as Honorary Co-Chairmen of Expo '83 and were scheduled to appear with their groups for the second year in a row. Co-sponsored by *The Tennessean* (Nashville's morning paper), Expo '83 will benefit, in part, The W.O. Smith Community School of Music. The school, a project of the NMA and the Music Consortium of Nashville, plans to offer instruction in music at a nominal fee for children who would not otherwise be able to afford it. In addition to the Oak Ridge Boys and Charlie Daniels and **The Charlie Daniels Band**, others lined up for the four concerts included: **Carl Perkins, Bobby Bare, Dean Martin, Jason and the Nashville Scorchers**, and **Ed Bruce**.

Minnie and Company at the North Shore Music Theatre, Long Island.

Good Medicine Traveling Far

Four solo artists—**Minnie Pearl, Vernon Oxford, Steve Young**, and **Mindy J.**—and four groups—**The Dixie Doughboys, The Cyclone Rangers, The Bluegrass Band**, and **Pat Cannon's Foot and Fiddle Dancers**—toured this summer as "The Grand Old Country Music Show." A blend of Nashville and New York talent, the show played various locations across the country and will tour again in late February through early April and in the summer months. Audiences and reviewers from both the East coast and the Midwest found the show both traditional and delightful. Minnie & Co. sold out Artpark near Buffalo, New York, playing to more than 5,000 people in the course of two performances.

(Continued from page 8)

tucky Fried Chicken Country Music Songwriting Contest. The contest, in its seventh year, gives the grand prize winner a chance to hear his or her song recorded by Lee. The single will then be distributed to radio stations nationwide.

Welcome to the Family

Remember when **Eddie Rabbitt** and **Crystal Gayle** teamed up for their duet, "You and I"? Well, it seems that they have more than a hit record in common. Both welcomed new additions to their families recently. Crystal and her husband **Bill Gatzimos** became the parents of **Catherine Claire**, their first baby. Eddie and his wife **Janine** were blessed with a baby boy, **Timothy Edward**. This is their second child. Now that the baby is born, Eddie is back to work and filmed a segment of *Entertainment Tonight*. The film included Eddie doing WSM's *Music Country Network* on the same date. Eddie is also rehearsing a new show for his upcoming tour, in support of his new album, *Greatest Hits, Vol. II*. **Karen Brooks** opened for Eddie in El Paso, Ft. Worth, Amarillo and Houston.

Benefits

The Statler Brothers, Gail Davies and **Carl Perkins** were on hand to perform at the second annual **Mel Tillis** Orange Blossom Special in Gainesville, Florida. The concert, for the benefit of the University of Florida Athletic Booster Club, preceded the Vanderbilt-Florida Football Game at the 12,000 seat Stephen C. O'Connell Activity Center on the university campus. Mel performed with his band and served as host.

Signed on the Dotted Line

As we told you last issue, Opryland was sold...now it's official. The sale of the complex to Gaylord Broadcasting of Oklahoma City and Dallas was made final early this fall. When the documents were signed, **Edward L. Gaylord**, chairman and president of the Gaylord corporation said: "Ever since July 1, we have been looking forward to the day this sale would be complete. The Gaylord family has grown with the addition of Opryland USA Inc., and we are excited about getting to know our new family members better." Mr. Gaylord assumes the post as

(Continued on page 12)

People

Everyone Reads Country Music Magazine

Earl Thomas Conley was in New York recently for a number of press and media interviews, and stopped by the offices of *Country Music* Magazine. Earl took the time to skim through the pages but said he wanted to hold off on reading it until his plane ride home. Considering the plane trip from New York to Nashville takes about two hours, we're sure Earl was able to read it from cover to cover.

Station to Station

Church Street Station, newest in The Nashville Network's concert series, will become part of their weekend schedule early in 1984. Production has begun in Cheyenne Saloon and Opera House in Orlando's Church Street Station entertainment complex, and live, in-concert shows will be featured.

They have already lined up **T. G. Sheppard** (who will be hosting a show in January), **Tanya Tucker, Razzy Bailey, Terri Gibbs, Gene Watson, Gail Davies, Rex Allen, Jr., Charlie Rich, Freddy Fender, Barbara Fairchild, Dave Rowland and Sugar** and **Danny Davis** and the **Nashville Brass** for the thirty-minute show.

The Nashville Network has contracted with Salt and Pepper Television, an Orlando-based television production firm, to produce the show. Everyone involved is very excited about *Church Street Station* and believes that the Cheyenne Saloon, which can seat 1,000 people, is an ideal location for showcasing major country talent.

All Clogged Out

As *Country Music* Magazine went to press, more than 1,000 cloggers from parts near and far were headed towards Nashville for the first annual *HeeHaw* International Clogging Championship in late October. Contestants came from nineteen states, mostly from the South and Southeast, but some from as far west as California and Colorado and as far north and east as Pennsylvania. Coordinated by *HeeHaw's* Moonshine Cloggers, sisters **Debra McCoy** and **Diana Hatfield,** the competition included preliminaries on four different stages in Opryland Park and finals onstage at the Grand Ole Opry House. Teams, duets, novelty groups and individuals were prepared to clack their heels on the boards for the six judges, brought from six different states—California, Florida, Georgia, Utah and North and South Carolina—so that, as *HeeHaw* producer **Sam Luvullo** said, "the various styles of clogging can be considered." Winners were to be titled "World's Best Cloggers" and were to appear on *HeeHaw*, where they can expect to be seen by more than twenty million people.

Hatfield and McCoy (r., l.) clogging with Roy Clark.

Two's Company

Newest in the pairing of country music artists, are **Steve Wariner** and **Barbara Mandrell.** They have teamed up together in concerts and now they are doing it on record. Their duet, "Overnight Sensation" can be heard on Steve's *Midnight Fire* album and Barbara's *Spun Gold.*

People

(Continued from page 10)
chairman of the board of Opryland USA, Inc., and **E.W. Wendell**, continues as president and chief executive officer.

Basic Country

From Florida comes news of a country single, written by **Felicia Scherer**, based on actual events she has witnessed in her own family: computers slip in where there used to be romance. The song, "BASIC Ain't the Language of Love," tells the story of a boy and girl who each become more interested in their computers than each other. Well, country music is the language of *everything.*

Tidbits

The **Johnson** sisters, **Loudilla, Loretta** and **Kay**, recently appeared with **Loretta Lynn** in a *HeeHaw* television taping. The sisters are celebrating their 20th year as co-presidents of The Loretta Lynn Fan Club.

Waylon Jennings and **Hank Williams, Jr.** teamed up for a duet video, soon to be aired throughout the country. It features the boys singing as well as in conversation, paying tribute to **Hank Williams, Sr.**

The Gatlins sang the National Anthem at the U.S. Open Tennis Tournament and are set to do it again on Monday Night Football when the New Orleans Saints take on the New York Jets.

Lee Greenwood has recorded "My Lover's Eyes" in London strictly for a European release, with Jerry Crutchfield producing. He is also looking forward to the release of "Somebody's Gonna Love You" in Japan.

Lee is also busy singing a medley of Coors Beer commercials, and recently appeared at the annual marketing convention of Coors Beer in Reno, Nevada. Lee recently went on a campaign to name his band. And it seems that if it's a hit song, it could turn into a band name. That's what happened when Lee elected to title his group. The musicians will be called **The Trick Band** and his two new female backup singers are dubbed **Magic**. Of course this was taken from his hit single, "Ain't No Trick. . . It Takes Magic." Lee also has a new touring bus, but hasn't settled on a name for it yet.

Loretta Lynn broke the all-time attendance record previously held by **Charley Pride** at the Yellowstone Exhibition Fair in Billings, Montana. Her August concert drew more than 20,000 people for the two shows. ■

Janie Fricke teams up with Alabama at a recording session.

Janie Fricke on the Tube

What happens when you have sold-out concerts, get invited by **President Reagan** to entertain at Camp David, win the CMA's Female Vocalist of the Year award and chart with Number One records? Well, if you're **Janie Fricke**, you get to have your own TV special. Janie joined the ranks of **Crystal Gayle, The Statler Brothers, Johnny Cash** and others when she taped her own show, *Janie Fricke: You Ought To Be In Pictures.* Part of the Country Comes Alive 3 series, the two-hour special featured guest appearances by **Alabama, Lynn Anderson, Ruth Buzzi, Johnny Duncan, Roger Miller, John Schneider, Ray Stevens** and **Conway Twitty.** The special was taped in the Tennessee Performing Arts Center in Nashville and Nashville's Music Mall, where Janie joined Alabama for a recording session. If you didn't get a chance to see the original broadcast, which was set to air in October or November, it will be repeated in February or March.

Winners at the Ionia Free Fair

Take It to the Top

Heyworth, Illinois; Coffeyville, Kansas; Greeley, Colorado; Fort Stockton, Texas; McComb, Mississippi; Port Allegheny, Pennsylvania—from these places and others like them come the groups and solo artists competing in the nationwide Wrangler Country Showdown, sponsored by Dodge Trucks and the makers of Wrangler Jeans, with the help of PS Productions in Troy, Michigan. Starting with local contests organized through local radio stations, moving on to state fair competitions in 51 states, and then to Opryland Park in Nashville, November 14-17, contestants work towards an appearance on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry in a group of ten finalists. From among them judges select a winner to receive $50,000 in cash from Wrangler Jeans, a Dodge Ram Van, a one year recording contract with Compleat Records, a booking contract with the William Morris Agency, Gibson guitars and a Kimball grand piano. Contestants may not have held a previous recording contract with a national recording company, and among other conditions they agree to on the entry form, they "must exercise good taste while performing, and no songs may contain lyrics which could be considered offensive." Last year's winner, **Denise Price**, was from Carmi, Illinois. State Fairs winners at the time *Country Music* went to press were: **Rodeo**, from Florida, **Wild Country**, Delaware; **Sheyenne River Band**, North Dakota; **Neal Kell & the Night Ryders**, Northern California; **Southern Tears**, New York; **Steve Hall & Southbound 76**, Minnesota; **Alive & Pickin**, Rhode Island; **Neal McGaughey**, East Texas; **Bo Garza and the South Texas Wailers**, West Texas; **The Stone Country Band**, Michigan; **Martina Schiff**, Kansas; **Images**, Illinois; and **The Memorable Band**, Wisconsin.

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TAMMY WYNETTE
Apartment No. 9 • Your Good Girl's Gonna Go Bad • I Don't Wanna Play House • Stand by Your Man • D-I-V-O-R-C-E • The Ways to Love a Man • Kids Say the Darndest Things • You and Me • Near You

WAYLON JENNINGS
Anita, You're Dreaming • Love of the Common People • MacArthur Park • The Only Daddy That'll Walk the Line • Brown Eyed Handsome Man • Ladies Love Outlaws • Never Been to Spain • The Taker • I'm a Rambling Man

JOHNNY CASH
I Walk the Line • Folsom Prison Blues • Guess Things Happen That Way • Ring of Fire • One Piece at a Time • Jackson • Daddy Sang Bass • A Boy Named Sue • Sunday Morning Coming Down

DOLLY PARTON
Mule Skinner Blues • Coat of Many Colors • Jolene • Love is Like a Butterfly • The Seeker • The Bargain Store • In the Good Old Days (When Times Were Bad) • Traveling Man • My Tennessee Mountain Home

THE STATLER BROTHERS
Flowers on the Wall • You Can't Have Your Kate and Edith Too • Ruthless • Bed of Rose's • Do You Remember These? • Class of '57 • I'll Go to My Grave Loving You • Who Am I to Say? • Do You Know You Are My Sunshine?

MARTY ROBBINS
I'll Go on Alone • Singing the Blues • Knee Deep in the Blues • A White Sports Coat • El Paso • Devil Woman • Ribbon of Darkness • My Woman, My Woman, My Wife • El Paso City

CHARLEY PRIDE
All I Have to Offer You (Is Me) • Amazing Love • Is Anybody Goin' to San Antone? • Kiss an Angel Good Morning • All His Children • Mississippi Cotton Picking Delta Town • Hope You're Feelin' Me (Like I'm Feelin' You) • When I Stop Leaving (I'll Be Gone) • She's Just an Old Love Turned Memory

BARBARA MANDRELL
Do Right Woman, Do Right Man • I've Been Loving You Too Long • Tonight My Baby's Coming Home • Holdin' on (to the Love I Got) • Treat Him Right • The Midnight Oil • Show Me • This Time I Almost Made It • Give a Little, Take a Little

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TERRI GIBBS

Music Is a Serious Business

Just three years ago, a shy young blind girl from Georgia quietly released her first single record. To everybody's delight, the song tap-danced up the country charts and ricocheted over to pop's Top Ten. Fans bought almost 100,000 copies of the single, and the music industry took note. Executives at her record label smiled. The Academy of Country Music gave her its New Female Vocalist award. After "Somebody's Knockin' " the world did indeed appear rosy to Terri Gibbs. She was, it seemed, destined for stardom.

But one song does not a superstar make, and since the brilliant success of that first single, none of Terri Gibbs's nine subsequent singles reached *Billboard's* Country Top Ten. They didn't exactly disappear—some of them placed *near* the Top Ten—and Terri did amass quite a following of devoted fans, but it takes a *string* of hits to stay in the music business big leagues, and nobody knows that better than Terri Gibbs.

Dressed in worn but neat bluejeans and a plain beige blouse, Terri looks younger than her 29 years as she perches demurely on the edge of a straight-back chair in a tiny stark room at her modestly decorated downtown Nashville office. Reserved and serious by nature but patient and courteous with others, Terri obviously wants to get past insignificant small talk and go straight to the issue at hand. Her music is serious business at this critical point in her career, and because she is cautiously optimistic about her newest album, she is very anxious to learn what the public has to say about it.

"I'd like to have another super-hit," she admits in a slow, deliberate Georgia drawl, "but what I'd *really* like is to be consistent. I'd like to have some Top Ten records that are consistent with the Terri Gibbs sound."

But what went wrong after her one and only Number One hit? Was its success just a fluke?

"I felt like I started at the top and went progressively down. I think we got stale," she says, referring to herself and her former producer, Ed Penney. "I don't think I ever found that consistency with Ed Penney, and that's not to criticize him. I'm still looking for it."

It is in the nature of the business to come down hard on the producer, however, and some people in the recording industry *do* criticize Penney for Terri's sagging career, despite the fact that he personally discovered her, brought her out of Georgia nightclubs to Nashville, and co-wrote the colossal hit that got her started.

Penney says that his efforts were undermined by her record label, MCA. "With Terri's unique and special voice, I always felt it'd be wrong to produce her as conventionally or conservatively as other producers might have done," he explains. "I gambled on quality, and the reviews of her albums were consistently high ...but we lost all the momentum of 'Somebody's Knockin' ' when, despite my strong objections, the pop department of MCA in California insisted that 'Rich Man' be the follow-up release. It was a fine album song, but a dreadful choice for a single. I believe there were several other songs in that first album that could easily have gone to the top of the country charts. From there on, it was like starting over.

"I'm proud of the three albums I produced on Terri Gibbs," Penney concludes. "Now she and I are going our separate ways and I wish us both well. There are other windmills and rainbows to joust and chase after and as long as I place quality over expediency, I will find it very easy to live with myself as a producer and as a songwriter."

"He did the best he knew how," Terri says in his behalf, "and he tried his hardest for me. I'm grateful to him for what he's done. He discovered me."

Terri is more inclined to attribute her hit hiatus to the bittersweet fact that, as a rookie artist with an overnight success, she was inexperienced. People tended to expect too much from her, she believes, and looked to every song for a super hit.

"It scared the fire out of me when I had a hit record. I didn't know what to do. I

MCA RECORDS

by Paula Lovell Hooker

"Having a hit record scared me. I didn't know what to do. I wish I could have built up to it, 'cause I wasn't ready back then. But now I'm ready."

wasn't ready. You get out there on a concert tour, competing with all these other people, and you've got to be tough. I wish I could have built up to it. All of a sudden, I had a band and a producer and a manager...and I'd never considered how hard the travelling is. And I never thought of the worries of the road."

Despite her reluctance to publicly pin the blame on Penney, Terri has enlisted a new producer, Rick Hall of Muscle Shoals, Alabama, for her current album, *Over Easy*.

"I chose him because I have a blues background and so does he," she says. "He produced Etta James, Wilson Pickett, Aretha Franklin and a lot of the old blues acts. Now he's producing Jerry Reed, Gus Hardin and Mac Davis. I thought we'd be a good combination."

"We think alike," says Hall, who has produced 35 gold records. "We're tuned in to the same radio station, and I think we're on the right track...I never met Ed Penney, but I'm a big fan of his." Hall speculates that the Penney/Gibbs problem was simply a matter of not having the right song. "We've absolutely got the songs this time. The worst that could happen is three Top Ten singles and a hope for a crossover."

Aside from a more laid-back approach to recording in the Muscle Shoals studio, Terri doesn't feel there's a tremendous difference between her new album and her first three. "It's probably more lively and it has a little more spark to it," she says. "I feel I was vocally captured better on this album, maybe because I was more relaxed. The more you work at something, the more relaxed you get."

Terri calls the album "consistently country" with the goal being to re-establish her as a country artist, then go for a crossover tune. "But I don't care if I ever cross over," insists Terri. "I didn't try to cross over with 'Somebody's Knockin'.' It just happened."

Terri is willing—would probably prefer—to back up and take a slower, more calculated climb to the the top this time. It took years of playing in lounges and a lifetime of dreaming about being a performer before she tasted the sweetness of success, and she's not likely to give up now.

Terri grew up on her father's dairy farm with farm animals as her friends and music as her first love. She preferred to play alone as a child, and considers herself as a loner today. Her whole family was

SHAUN STANLEY

music-oriented, but nobody was as dedicated as little Terri, who played piano by ear at the age of three because she was too impatient to learn to read Braille first.

"My mother never could get me to do anything because I always had the radio or the record player going, or I was playing the piano," she recalls. "It's all I ever did. Other kids had dolls and toys, and I did too, but music was my main thing. As a little girl I went to all the country music shows that came through town, and just wished I could get up on stage and sing."

After dropping out of Augusta College to join a band, Terri did time singing backup and playing piano for a local group. She made regular, albeit discouraging, trips to Nashville in pursuit of a more lucrative and rewarding career. More than once, she seriously considered trading in her piano for a typewriter and office work; but thanks to a supportive family and the encouragement of an important and influential admirer in Nashville, Chet Atkins, Terri kept plunking away.

It wasn't until 1978, when she went solo, that she started to develop a distinct sound of her own.

"Those solo years did me more good than anything I've ever done, because it was all mine and I knew I had to carry it alone. I reached out for different things and experiences. For a long time while growing up, it was cool to sound like somebody else. For a while I sounded like Karen Carpenter. Then I sounded like Anne Murray. Then I realized it's not cool to sound like somebody else. I wanted to sound like Terri Gibbs."

Terri was always an admirer of Aretha Franklin, Anne Murray, Linda Ronstadt and Emmylou Harris. She was also influenced by George Jones's country and Ray Charles's blues, but only recently did she *really* decide she wanted and needed her own distinctive sound. "It just dawned on me about six months ago that I have something different to offer." For lack of a better definition, she half-jokingly calls her sound, "funky country blues," and she hopes that her new album capitalizes on her blues background, her country roots and the lively style she personally enjoys.

And what if it doesn't "happen" again for Terri Gibbs?

"There's more to a big artist than a hit record," theorizes Rick Hall. "There's no limit to how big Terri can be. She's had a terrible setback and her confidence was shaken, but she's got it back and I think you'll see a whole new human being blooming. There's something about blind people. I've seen it in Ray Charles and Ronnie Milsap. They live their music, and they get to you."

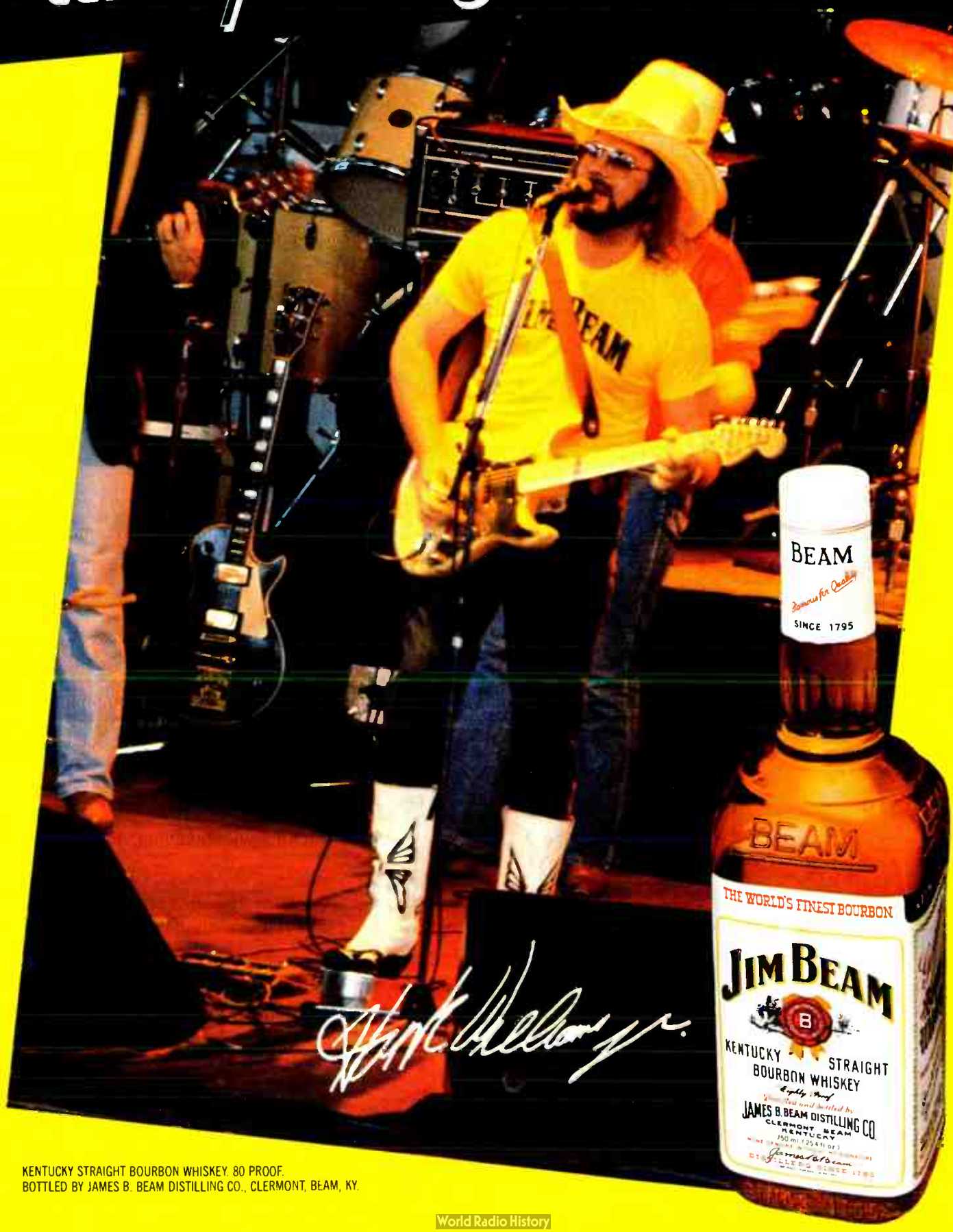
"I'm hesitant to say this," ventures Terri candidly. "Music is not my whole life, but it's always been *in* my life and will continue to be. When I was a little girl, I always wanted to be a singer, and yet I always wanted to get married and have a home and children and bake cookies and be Suzy Homemaker. I still want to. I'm terribly old-fashioned and romantic, and I sincerely hope I don't meet anybody and fall head-over-heels till I'm ready—because I know if I do, I'll end up marrying him. And that would be hard right now."

In her own words, her goals are to be "consistent;" to be "a household word but not outrageous;" to be "a successful songwriter;" and to be "married and have a family."

"I'll hang in there for a while," she says. "I think it's going to happen with the right producer, but I don't believe in being under any illusions.

"I certainly don't want to be thought of as a failure, a one-hit artist," she admits with a noticeable shudder. "That's hard. But you know, if people think that, they don't understand the accomplishment I made, and what it all means to me, and what I want. Having a hit record scared me. I didn't know what to do. I wish I could have built up to it, 'cause I wasn't ready back then. But now, I'm ready—boy, am I ready!" ■

"It's a family tradition."



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BORN TO WIN

Ray Charles and the Country Connection

"Hey, y'all, tell everybody Ray Charles is in town
I got a dollar and a quarter, and I'm just rarin' to clown..."
—"Let the Good Times Roll"

It's hard to picture Ray Charles as an elder statesman, but that is what he is. At 52, after 35 years in show business, he refers to himself today as "the old man". His music has obviously evolved from the house-rocking, foot-stomping, storefront fervor that revolutionized American popular music between 1954 and 1959, when "What'd I Say?" was banned on radio stations all across the country. And yet his commitment to the music is just the same—it is a fundamental commitment to a whole range of American sounds: the gospel stylings with which he made his reputation, the country and western with which he solidified it, the blues from which he started, the show tunes he has always adored and the jazz and hard bop by which he always measured his aspirations. He remains the most protean figure on the landscape of pop music, and he is one of the few stars who has aged gracefully in the business, with none of the forced enthusiasm or diminished energy that afflicts almost every one-time singing idol. Because, of course, he has continued to grow, he has continued to hear new sounds.

"Look, let's face it, good music is good music," he insists without irony in his tastefully appointed Los Angeles studio/office building, while mixing the single from his new country album for CBS. Meaning what, Ray? "Meaning good is always good—I don't care if it's Beethoven, Chopin, Rachmaninoff, or one of those cylinders that was made almost hundred years ago; effort went into it, and I can appreciate that. Music's been around a long time, and there's going to be music long after Ray Charles is dead, but I just want to make my mark, leave something musically good behind. If it's a big record, that's the frosting on the cake, but music's the main meal."

Here is a day for Ray Charles, not typical perhaps, because no day is likely to be quite like any other, but characteristic for its concentration of energies, diffusion, business, and brisk sense of pace. Ray is finishing up the album he has been working on for the last year or so, for the last six months in earnest, with only the mix on the single to complete before it is ready to master. When I am ushered in at 11, he has been hard at work for over three hours already and barely looks up from the 24-track board. He is hunched over, lips pursed, brow furrowed, intent. As at almost every other moment in the two days that I spend with him, he is surrounded by sound; if it is not pouring out of the giant Rogers speakers cantilevered from the ceiling above the console, he is humming something to himself—"The Marine Hymn," "Silent Night," the "Theme from "Peter Gunn"—or whistling a snatch of "The Pink Panther," "The Blue Danube Waltz," "Pop Goes the Weasel," anything, really, but the cutting edge of silence. He is a trim, energetic man, seemingly untouched by the years save for the flecks of gray in his hair. He is dressed neatly in basic colors—black beltless slacks, red shirt with white buttons and a white RC monogrammed on the breast pocket, shiny black loafers, and, of course, the wraparound dark glasses that have been his trademark since friends suggested wearing them "for the sake of appearance."

The control room itself is a model of efficiency. Everything is in its place, from Ray's oversized Houston Oilers coffee mug to the dozens, maybe even hundreds of cassette demos and boxes of reel-to-reel tape that spill out of the closet, to the empty ashtray, precisely positioned chairs, and gleaming machinery with its whirring tapes, myriad levers and lighted up buttons which are the tools of his trade. Ray moves about the room with the surefooted rapidity of a sighted person in a hurry. He doesn't walk, he runs, and he is a man in constant motion.

Over and over he listens to the song, bringing up one track, mixing down another, trying to bring the phaseshifter guitar into focus on both channels without losing the thudding bottom of bass and drums. The studio is dark, the lights in the control room dim, as he deftly manipulates the levers, marking the sound level for each passage.

The sound booms out first from the studio speakers, then is switched down to a pair of tiny Auratones, then down to a mono mix— "for the lady working in the kitchen listening to her AM radio," says Ray. "I just want to be sure the sound is there, I want to hear the remnants of the

BEVERLY PARKER

by Peter Guralnick

Ray Charles is not one to look back . . .
Not at his heroin addiction, nor at the creative ferment which engulfed him, nor at the recording popularity which has fled.

records to Ralph Burns or Sid Feller or Quincy Jones, and put together an eighteen-piece big band for his live performances.

Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music was probably the high point of his ABC period, both artistically and commercially. It was a new direction, an old enthusiasm ("I always loved country music, you must understand that"), another pathbreaking move, and a bridge to a racially mixed audience of hitherto undreamt-of proportions. When he proposed to do the album, Sam Clark, the president of ABC, suggested that he might lose some fans. "Which I thought was very legitimate, very nice. I said, 'Well, Mr. Clark, I feel that you are totally right about that. And I've thought about that.' Which I had. 'But the reason I want to do this is that I think I can gain more than I can lose.' And the rest is history. I had never heard 'I Can't Stop Loving You,' never heard 'Born to Lose.' [Producer] Sid Feller must have sent me about 150 songs, and I picked out the ones I wanted to do, and it worked out pretty good."

Ray stayed with ABC for about fifteen years, enjoying one degree of success or another and weathering heroin busts in Philadelphia, Indianapolis, and finally (in 1965) a headline-making one in Boston, which took him off the road for a year and led him to quit the drug once and for all. When he left ABC in 1973, he took his masters with him. Since then he has released several albums on his own Crossover label, made four records for Atlantic in the late '70s, and remained one of the most popular concert performers and TV guest stars around.

What is so striking in any brief rundown of Ray Charles's life is what he has left behind. Ray Charles is not one to look back. Not at his Nat King Cole period. Not at the Atlantic years. Not at his heroin addiction, nor at the creative ferment which engulfed him, nor at the recording popularity which has fled. Once a door is closed, it is closed. It is at once his strength and his weakness that Ray cannot admit to regrets. Blindness has kept him from none of the things a sighted person is able to do, Ray has insisted over and over; so, too, heroin addiction, while a bothersome intrusion and one ultimately to be set aside, carried with it none of the debilitating effects—to self or creativity—that other addicts have cited. The past is past, a realm about which he expresses bemusement but little interest. "Man, do you realize that's twenty [or thirty] years ago," he is likely to say. "Damn, that was a long time ago."

It's a pleasure to spend time with Ray Charles. I can't recall an occasion when I have been more awestruck by the person that I have been interviewing, when I have felt more as if I am being taken to school. And yet you wonder if somehow all of this intuitive wisdom, all of this hard-earned control does not stand in the way of the freedom that gave birth to the music—just once you'd like to hear the old Ray Charles cut loose with that unpremeditated yelp, the joyousness and pain that were right on the surface, some said too close to the surface, of those seemingly unself-conscious early sides. You know that this is not what you are going to get, though—in fact Ray recognizes this and sees change as growth, sees it to be as natural and necessary as any other aspect of his evolution.

"I hope I've grown," he says. "I hope I don't sound the same at 52 as I did when I was eighteen. If I do, there's something wrong. You know, people are always saying, 'How come you don't do more of your old-type stuff?' and I understand what they mean. Which I appreciate, and which I enjoy—in its place. But the way I look at it, a person don't never stay the same. Every day, you grow . . . Some people say, 'Oh, Ray Charles is in a country bag now.' Not true. I happen to have cut a country album, but I might just turn around tomorrow and cut a jazz album or a blues album—I don't know. The bottom line is that I must enjoy me—as egotistical as it sounds, it must knock me out first, because if I don't feel it, I can't expect you to feel it.

"Music, you see, is an art, and it has to always be treated that way. The trouble with the 'record industry' is that people are always saying, 'What did he do last? What's his sales?' Well . . . The big record companies, between you and I, put the little companies out of business. But the little companies developed people like me. The little companies could take an artist and grow with the artist and let him experiment—if it weren't for experiment, Ray Charles as we know him today wouldn't exist! I'm very disturbed about this, man, not so much for me as for the kids coming up. I mean, they talk about the new computer games, how they gonna put the record companies out of business. Bullshit! What's that got to do with listening to music? There ain't never been a time in history when people didn't appreciate good music."

"In my life," he says, "everything I did, I did what I thought was right at the time. In my music I've always sung music I've liked, and I've always sung it the way I feel *tonight*, tomorrow it may be something else altogether. Every song represents itself, each song demands its own setting. Everything, Peter, to simplify it for you and me, everything as far as I'm concerned is notes that Humphrey Bogarted or Bette Davised. Instead of talking it, I sing it. But it's a script, and you make yourself—according to the script—believable. Every script ain't sad, every script ain't funny, every script is not a dramatic-type thing."

Music has remained the constant. Music and the life of music—life on the road. *The road*, he wrote in his autobiography, *was my life. It still is. I'll follow it for as long as it pays.* "The road," he declares to me, "can be a jungle. *If* you're not organized. It's just knowing what you're doing, that's all. It's not difficult, it's not intricate, it's not even complex. It's just plain old common sense. If you know where you're going, what time you're supposed to be there, how you're going to get there, what else is left? But you *must* be organized!"

"I've been in this business a long time, Peter," he says, "I know how it works.

"See, you learned something, didn't you? You just keep on living, brother, you keep on living three or four more weeks, and you'll learn a lot more. Well, you know, I keep saying this to you because I really want you to understand, but I'm just one of these guys—I'm a very plain, simple person, man. And most times when people really start talking to me and get around me, what seems to impress them is not so much me being Ray Charles as that I'm nowhere near being what they thought. I've had people say to me, 'I never thought you'd stand up and talk to me like that,' but I'm just not this 'go screw yourself' kind of guy. See, I'm the kind of guy who will never promise something I cannot live up to, I believe if my word ain't nothing, I ain't nothing. That's just the way I am, and that's why you see me breaking my butt on this album—I won't give you no sugar, to hell with that! I ain't got time for that, and you don't want to hear it.

"But I can tell you the *truth*!" ■

COUNTRY MUSIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA

FOR MEMBERS ONLY

You Can Help Organize A Local Society Chapter

We are exploring ways to start local or regional chapters of the *Country Music Society of America.*

Members are invited to help develop local chapters, select officers and plan activities.

Plans are now being developed for an experimental West Texas Chapter, with others planned for a Rocky Mountain regional chapter and state-wide chapters for Indiana, Nebraska and Oklahoma.

Any *Society* member is eligible as a candidate to lead the formation of a local, regional or state-wide chapter. If you want to participate, or if you have a friend who you believe is knowledgeable about country music and a good organizer, let us know. Write to: Membership Director, Country Music Society of America, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016.

Membership Hits 40,000

Forty thousand hard-core country music fanatics have enrolled as Charter Members in the first two months of our membership drive. That's great! And, even more than we expected, but the more the better. We are, however, swamped. Membership packets are being prepared now, but we are behind schedule. So, be patient if yours hasn't arrived yet.

Special Activities Begin

Each month, in addition to other activities, members will be eligible to vote on some matter of interest to the *Society.* (See your 1983 Awards Ballot on this page.) And, a Member's Bonus and a Member's Special of the Month will both be offered at special savings to members which are made possible by the *Society's* combined buying power.

Send Your Suggestions

If you have suggestions for special offerings or activities you want the Society to consider, write your suggestions to the Membership Director.

Member's Bonus

This month, the Society, in conjunction with the Country Music Foundation in Nashville, was able to arrange a special 20% discount for Members on the Foundation's Official 1984 Calendar. The Foundation, which operates the Country Music Hall of Fame, has produced one of the most beautiful calendars we've seen for 1984, full of excellent color photos of major country stars. The regular price is $6.95, but Members only pay $5.56. To order one of these fine calendars, use the coupon on this page.

How to Join the Society

If you would like to join the *Society,* or if you have friends who would, there are two ways to join. First, anyone can join for one year by sending a check for $15.00 to the Membership Director, Country Music Society of America, P.O. Box 2000, Marion, Ohio 43306. Secondly, subscribers to *Country Music Magazine* can convert their present subscriptions to Charter Memberships by taking the special offer described on page 39 of this issue.

Special Members Only Discounts

MAIL TO: Country Music Society of America, Discount Dept., 450 Park Ave. So., New York, N.Y. 10016

As a Charter Member you qualify for these special discounts for this issue. If you're not a *Society* member, turn the page to see how you can get in on the great bargains.

ITEM	REGULAR PRICE	MEMBER PRICE
☐ 1984 Country Calendar Pg	$6.95	$5.56 (plus $2.10 p/h)
☐ The Mandrell Family Album	$14.95	$11.96 (plus $2.10 p/h)
☐ Smithsonian Collection	$54.95	$43.96 (plus $3.75 p/h)

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CAST YOUR VOTE
1983 AWARDS BALLOT

Winners of the 1983 Country Music Association Awards have already been announced. These important, highly-respected awards are voted on by professionals in the country music business. We thought it would be interesting to see how *Society* members would vote on the same nominees. So, cast your vote, clip and mail ballot to Awards, Country Music Society of America, 450 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. Your vote will be tabulated and results published later. Winners will be given special awards.

Write your membership number here for validation. Number _____.

ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR

☐ Alabama
☐ Merle Haggard
☐ Barbara Mandrell
☐ Willie Nelson
☐ Ricky Skaggs

VOCALISTS OF THE YEAR

MALE

☐ John Anderson
☐ Lee Greenwood
☐ Merle Haggard
☐ Willie Nelson
☐ Ricky Skaggs

FEMALE

☐ Lacy J. Dalton
☐ Janie Fricke
☐ Emmylou Harris
☐ Barbara Mandrell
☐ Reba McEntire

SONG OF THE YEAR

☐ *Always on My Mind*
J. Christopher, W. Thompson, M. James
☐ *If You're Gonna Do Me Wrong (Do It Right)*
V. Gosdin, Max D. Barnes
☐ *I.O.U.*
K. Chater, A. Roberts
☐ *Swingin'*
J. Anderson
☐ *Sixteenth Avenue*
T. Schuyler

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

☐ *Highways and Heartaches*
Ricky Skaggs
☐ *It Ain't Easy*
Janie Fricke
☐ *Pancho & Lefty*
Merle Haggard/Willie Nelson
☐ *The Closer You Get*
Alabama
☐ *Wild and Blue*
John Anderson

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MEMORY LANE ALL-TIME FAVORITES: IT'S ONLY MAKE BELIEVE • MY SPECIAL ANGEL • THE TREASURE OF LOVE • MY TRUE LOVE • WILL YOU LOVE ME TOMORROW • EARTH ANGEL • IN THE STILL OF THE NIGHT • DEVIL OR ANGEL • JUST A DREAM • OH WHAT A NIGHT • YOU CHEATED • SIXTEEN CANDLES • DADDY'S HOME • ALL I HAVE TO DO IS DREAM • ONLY YOU (AND YOU ALONE) • COME SOFTLY TO ME • SEA OF LOVE • ONE SUMMER NIGHT • TWILIGHT TIME • MAYBE • TO KNOW HIM IS TO LOVE HIM • THE THREE BELLS • DONNA • THE GREAT PRETENDER • I'M SORRY • HE'LL HAVE TO GO • THOSE OLDIES BUT GOODIES (REMIND ME OF YOU) • SILHOUETTES (TWO SILHOUETTES ON THE SHADE) • PLUS MANY, MANY MORE!!!

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ALL-TIME DANCE FAVORITES: WHOLE LOTTA SHAKIN' GOIN' ON • THE STROLL • WHAT'D I SAY • THE TWIST • DO YOU WANNA DANCE • ROCK AROUND THE CLOCK • AT THE HOP • LONG TALL SALLY • LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL • REBEL ROUSER • STAGGER-LEE • TEQUILA •

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JOHN ANDERSON SWINGIN'

"Picture Songs," Hard Country, and Rock and Roll: A Winning Combination for This Year's Two-Time CMA Award Winner

It is late afternoon in Orlando, Florida, land of the orange tree and the animated mouse, and already the crowds are forming outside the tour bus. Behind the smoked glass of the bus, away from the mind-numbing heat of an Orlando afternoon, the Great White Hope of country music is sipping a little cola and something else with his eyes closed, trying to make it all go away.

"Well, the problem is, John..."

John Anderson opens his eyes and casts a pained look at the speaker, one of the road crew.

"...that he was only supposed to bring one guest, you know?"

John sips the cola without nodding. He picks up a cassette tape, the Australian band Men At Work, looks at it idly, then sets it back down.

"...But he brought fifteen or twenty people, you know, and he says they're all relatives of yours. Or friends. Or something..."

"Well, damn it!" John Anderson says, his Florida drawl turning the words into something like, "Wahlll, daaaaam it!" "I mean, I'm supposed to be performing here! I don't need this stuff!"

The door to the back of the bus closes, and John David Anderson sets down his drink and smiles awkwardly.

"It's tough," he says, "to play close to home."

It's even tougher to be tagged, along with Ricky Skaggs, as the Great White Hope of country music, the hard-core honky-tonker, spurning temptations galore to keep the music country, and the spirit true. Since signing his first major recording contract in 1980, John Anderson has been consistently touted as one of the major forces in keeping country *country*. And unlike the smooth country pop of Eddie Rabbitt or Kenny Rogers or the synthesized Texas sound of a million Willie Nelson clones, John Anderson's music remains true to that high lonesome sound. Songs like "1959," "I'm Just an Old Chunk of Coal" and "Catch a Falling Star" seem tied more closely to the country music of 1949 than that of 1983.

The toughest thing of all, of course, is that John David Anderson doesn't think of himself as any kind of savior at all—and certainly not the savior of country music.

"It's kind of weird in a lot of ways," he says. He seems puzzled by his hard-country Great White Hope label, especially since The Band, the Rolling Stones and the Beatles vie with George Jones and Merle Haggard for special places in his heart. The Stones' "Under My Thumb" has been a part of John Anderson's performances since, oh, high school. "And I'm flattered in a lot of ways. It's really good that my music, or Ricky's, or anybody else's is taken that seriously. It makes me feel good. I only hope I'm able to do it."

What's doubly puzzling is that "Swingin'," the song which launched John Anderson's career into the stratosphere, features punchy Memphis rhythm-and-blues-style strings and a hard-rocking arrangement that sent the song to the top of the country charts *and* some of the rock charts. In fact, the top-rated rock radio station in the country added "Swingin' " to its playlist when the station's program director heard the song on a country station while driving to work. "Swingin' " went on to become the only country single in 1983 to sell over one million copies. The Country Music Association nominated the song for both Single of the Year and Song of the Year.

"That song was real strange to everybody in Nashville doing it with me," John Anderson says. "I said, 'Well, y'all just close your eyes and follow me through this.' It was no accident—we put it on the album on purpose. It was a different song and we were going to show everybody that we could do some different stuff."

The song is photographically perfect:

Her brother was on the sofa
eating chocolate pie
Her mama was in the kitchen
cutting chicken up to fry
Her daddy was in the back yard
rolling up a garden hose
And I was on the porch with
Charlotte feeling love down to my toes
And we was swingin'
Yeah, we was swingin'

by Michael Bane

CHRISTOPHER WRIGHT

"If this 'country savior' stuff gets real serious, I'll change my name and do a rock and roll album. If I've got three million rock and roll fans out there with orange hair, I'll find something to play to them."

Ironically, after the success of "Swingin'," Anderson discovered a problem as old as Nashville itself. Suddenly, there were lots of producers willing to help an old Florida boy learn how to *really* make a country record. Change that *twang* a little, steer away from those horns. Forget that, John Anderson said. My way or no way.

"That's the part I'm telling you," he continues, breaking into small chuckles along the way. "What I'm telling you is a little weird to me, and, man, I don't ever want to shut if off. I'll never...if all this (country savior) stuff gets *real* serious, I'll change my name and do a rock and roll album. If I've got three million rock and roll fans out there with orange hair, I'll find something to play to them."

The road to "Swingin'" begins not far from where the bus is now parked, in Apopka, about fifteen miles north of Orlando. It's grove country, and in the spring the smell of the orange blossoms is almost overpowering. While he spent his share of time hunting and fishing in the woods around a pre-Disney World Orlando, John Anderson found himself drawn almost inexorably toward music. His father, a Marine Corps retiree making his way as a landscaping superintendent for a local college, and his mother, struggling to raise six kids in the small suburban house, saw nothing odd in his preoccupation with music. In fact, his father even bought John his first acoustic guitar.

"I was in a band when I was probably ten years old," he says. "We started a little combo —I guess you could call it a combo, if ten-year-olds play in combos. We played 'Louie, Louie,' 'House of the Rising Sun,' 'Hang On, Sloopy.' I don't know; I loved that early stuff. And my parents, they were behind me all the way. I was playing six or seven years before I could drive, and they hauled me around everywhere."

By the time he was twelve, John Anderson knew he wanted to make his living playing music. His older sister, Donna, was making moves in that direction, eventually forming her own folk group ("Willie Nelson once came to see her in Orlando"). He formed a rock band, the Living End, and spent most of his high school years covering Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix songs.

Ironically, it was the music of The Band that started him on the path to country music.

"I always thought a lot of their music was country, but I really liked it," he says. "What really had an effect on me was that theirs were some of the first 'picture' songs—where you could really see the pictures."

The idea of songs like photographs, everyday incidents trapped like a fly in amber, captivated the young rock and roller. He'd already begun feeling a dissatisfaction with the music he was playing, not so much because of the music itself as because of what he perceived to be the self-destructive lifestyle that came with it.

"I had so many friends that had a falling out with their parents right about then," he says. "It was a combination of things—the long hair, the drugs, the music—but the music was a large part of it. You know, it seemed like if you were going to relate to that kind of music, you needed to put a tourniquet on your arm and go out there with it. That's what the parents would say, anyway."

He saw his rock idols Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison fall victim to drugs, and saw their problems mirrored in the lives of his friends.

"'You're just gonna end up an old dope head,' your parents would say," he says today. "I don't know. A lot of that was happening then, and, sadly, it turned out there was some truth in what everybody said."

Years later, John Anderson would sing:

Would you catch a falling star
Before he crashes to the ground
Don't you know how people are
Nobody loves you when you're down

At the very peak of his disillusionment with rock, Anderson came across a Greatest Hits album by Merle Haggard, featuring such country standards as "Mama Tried" and "Lonesome Fugitive." Suddenly, everything jelled for him. "It just knocked me out," he says. "It was the first time I'd ever heard that kind of country music, and it got my attention. I'd been hearing from my sister Donna about people like Willie Nelson, but that album was the first I'd listened to. Knocked me out."

What he heard on that album was the logical extension of the music of The Band, songs that painted distinct, painfully authentic pictures. The singer becomes an actor, acting out a part; the emotions are understated but powerful.

In many ways, John Anderson represents a third generation of country singers, artists influenced primarily by rock and roll on the radio rather than earlier country music. The first generation of modern country singers, people like Hank Williams or Jimmie Rodgers, were the beginnings of modern country. The second generation, singers like Merle Haggard and Willie Nelson, were strongly influenced by the first generation. The third generation, though, are children of the mass media and the transistor radio, and, appropriately, their music is multifaceted. Rosanne Cash connected with country music when her father gave her a list of one hundred essential country songs to learn; Gary Stewart found his style by listening to the records of the Allman Brothers Band; John Anderson began leaning towards *his* sound because, like many music fans of his generation, his rock and roll world was deepened by the music of The Band. These singers have ended up "country" not by way of their roots or family tradition, not because the world in which they grew up was such that country was the only way for them to go. They are, in a way, "country" by accident—or perhaps more significantly, by conscious choice.

Thus, while John Anderson himself may find it puzzling or even disturbing that with his rock and roll background he is pegged as the bearer of the hard-country standard, the notion is as valid as it is ironic.

John Anderson's exposure to Merle Haggard turned his life around, and as soon as he got out of high school he took the Gray Dog to Nashville, another pilgrim with a guitar arriving at the Music City bus station. He stayed with his sister Donna and began the long process of carving out a niche in a city full of talented people trying to do the same thing.

"I remember you used to could sit around and just listen to guys play their songs," he says, "or you could get a guitar and play one of your own. It didn't matter then; we were friends. Some of them made it real big, you know, later on. Some of them already had hit songs. And some of them were just as great as any of the rest of us and never did a thing."

He began working the small clubs on

"Catch A Falling Star." © 1981 Bobby Braddock/Tree Publishing, Inc., B.M.I. Used by permission.

The reluctant champion of old-style hard-country music lays back in his parents' Florida home.

South Broadway near the old Ryman Auditorium, the tried-and-true beginning for an aspiring country singer. During the day he took odd jobs to survive. Once he was a plumber's helper; another time he worked on shingling the new Opry House at Opryland, which caused his friends to jibe that he'd finally made it to the top of country music.

He progressed from clubs to lounges and from lounges to small record labels, where he was able to work with Nashville's top pickers. The records failed, the record labels disappeared, but John Anderson held onto the praise he had received from the musicians on his sessions. These men had quite literally heard it all, but they took the time after each session to encourage the green singer from Florida. Hadn't heard anything like that in a long time, they'd say. Too long.

The Nashville he was up against at the time, though, wasn't very interested in hard country or Florida boys. The revolution sparked by Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings was still a year or so away, and John Anderson found himself butting up against the proverbial wall. Disillusioned and depressed, he headed for Texas to make a living playing the clubs there, but, if anything, that was worse than staying in Nashville. He resolved to give it one more shot, to go back to Nashville and try his music.

His recording of a song he'd written, "What Did I Promise Her Last Night," went nowhere, but Mel Tillis's version was a Top Ten hit. John Anderson had found a niche. He'd also found, in the year that he'd been gone, that the music business had changed. Nashville was in an uproar, and nobody knew where country music was headed. Maybe, John Anderson reasoned, it was headed his way.

"See that great big house over there?" John Anderson says, pointing to a Florida mansion. It is before the show in Orlando, and we are headed for his parents' house in Apopka for lunch. On the way, John is providing tour services. "That's one of the grove owners' houses. See that big house over there?"—he points again to a not-so-big mansion—"That's one of the processing plant managers' houses. See those little ratty houses over there? That's where I grew up." He breaks into a north Florida chuckle, sort of a cross between a snicker and a "Tee Hee Hee." John Anderson is on his home turf, and he's come back a winner.

On the way to Apopka, he's been talking about his music, the "picture music" that so captivated him early on.

"I'm into writing songs that paint pictures," he says. "I'm into *doing* songs that paint pictures. Some of us in the band call it picture music, and it really does paint a picture. That's what I'm after, a real portrayal.

He's especially proud of "Swingin'," which he wrote with Lionel Delmore; it was John who wrote the line "Sweet Charlotte is as purty as the angels when they sang..."

We arrive at the Anderson house, and this is what's going on:

Brother's in the back room, getting ready for the feast.

Mama's in the kitchen cutting veggies up in pieces.

Sisters set the table; their daddy grills the meat.

There isn't a swing in sight.

John Anderson plops down on the couch in the tiny den. There are a couple of deer heads and a bass on the wall, reminders of days when there was all the time in the world to tramp in the woods and dream. Later today, in Orlando, he'll walk out on the stage and sing Bo Diddley and the Rolling Stones and more than a little John Anderson. Some of the people in the crowd will remember a slightly different John Anderson, not so long ago. He'll do "Swingin'" twice, and the crowds will go wild.

On his *Wild and Blue* album, he realized a dream and dueted with Merle Haggard on the classic "Long Black Veil." The Country Music Association has nominated him for everything but sainthood, and his new album contains a couple of real rock screamers.

For now, though, he's content to sit on the couch, away from it all for a while, savoring his victory. ■

Where Country Music Is Going And Why Herman Woonzel Is Not Going With It

by Tom T. Hall

You might say that I discovered Herman Woonzel, country music legend, after he had been in show business for seventy years. I went out to his house, just north of Benton, Tennessee, in April of '79 to interview him. Herman Woonzel turned out to be a fascinating old gentleman and *Country Music Magazine* recently asked me to check on him. I am happy to report that he is still alive.

Herman used to work with a roller skating bear. The bear died and Herman inherited his disposition.

I phoned him the other day and asked if I could come out and do an update on his activities. He answered the phone: "Woonzel here."

"This is that Hall boy, the one who types. How are you, Mr. Woonzel?"

"I saw the sun come up this mornin' and I heard it, too."

I started to ask about the sound the sun makes when it comes up, but Herman won't do phone interviews, and he charges fifty dollars for live ones. "Mr. Woonzel, *Country Music Magazine* wants me to do another interview."

"Fine, be nice to see you. Bring the seventy-five dollars and bring me some Beanie Weenies."

"Did you say seventy-five dollars? I thought the fee was fifty."

"Had to go up on my price. Folks want to interview me because I'm still alive. I figure the longer I live the more I'm worth."

"And the Beanie Weenies?"

"A meal in a can. Got weenies and beans mixed up. Saves work."

"Two cans?"

"Four cans, they're small. Come out Friday afternoon at two o'clock." He hung up.

On Friday I drove out to Herman Woonzel's house and parked in the bare spot in front of the porch of his house. Coors beer had just become available in Tennessee and I had stopped at a roadside market and bought one of the tall ones. I popped the top on the Coors and walked around to the front of my old convertible and sat down on the fender. I heard a few domestic noises from inside the house and so I expected the arrival of Mr. Woonzel soon. I heard a voice behind me, "Who are you lookin' for, boy?"

I turned to see an old man of about seventy standing behind me with a shotgun. I put my hands into the air quickly and explained, "I'm lookin' for Mr. Woonzel."

"Herman Woonzel is dead. Deader'n a door nail."

I stood looking into the barrel of the shotgun. "I'm not a crook," I said foolishly.

"Never said you was."

"Why are you holding a gun on me?"

The old man looked at the gun as if he was seeing it for the first time. He lowered the gun and said, "Oh, I was trying to pick me up a spring rabbit 'fore they get warbles."

I started to ask what a warble is, but I didn't want to know.

"How did Mr. Woonzel die?"

"Uh," the old man stammered. "Uh, peaceful, real peaceful."

I was aware that my heart was beating abnormally fast when I heard a door slam behind me. I turned and saw Herman Woonzel standing on the porch of his house. As big as life. I was suddenly sorry for all of the bad things I had done in my life. I recalled the time I would not let Bobby Bare have any minnows from my minnow bucket.

Herman Woonzel spoke, "You that Hall boy, ain'tcha? He's all right, Fred." Mr. Woonzel spoke to the old man with the gun.

I got my breath back. "Mr. Woonzel, I just heard you were dead. This man said you were dead." I was repeating myself.

Herman Woonzel took a snuff box from his shirt pocket and put a pinch under his lower lip. "Well, son," he said, "I might be if I laid down and got real *kwite*."

Realizing that Mr. Woonzel was not dead, I got a little angry.

"Mr. Woonzel, I called about an interview, I can come back another time."

"Naw, ain't no need to huff off, sit down a minute." Mr. Woonzel looked off down the little dirt road and slapped his knee. "Doo da, Doo da." His voice was crackly and weak. "Hall boy, I think I am about to cash in; might this winter. I've seen winters in my time. Worked Minnesota one January. Never seen so much snow. Thought the Lord had given up on fire and decided to destroy the world with grits. Lordy, cold, so cold the bear's feet froze to the floor of the trailer, and had to use a water hose to get 'im loose. He was in pain for days and days. Can't stand the cold anymore. Kinda gets all in me. You know, like where my heart is and things."

"You told me the bear was a girl bear."

"Yes, you remembered that, he was."

"Roller skating bear."

"That's right, worked with George Burns that night, cold, real cold."

"You worked with George Burns?"

"Yep."

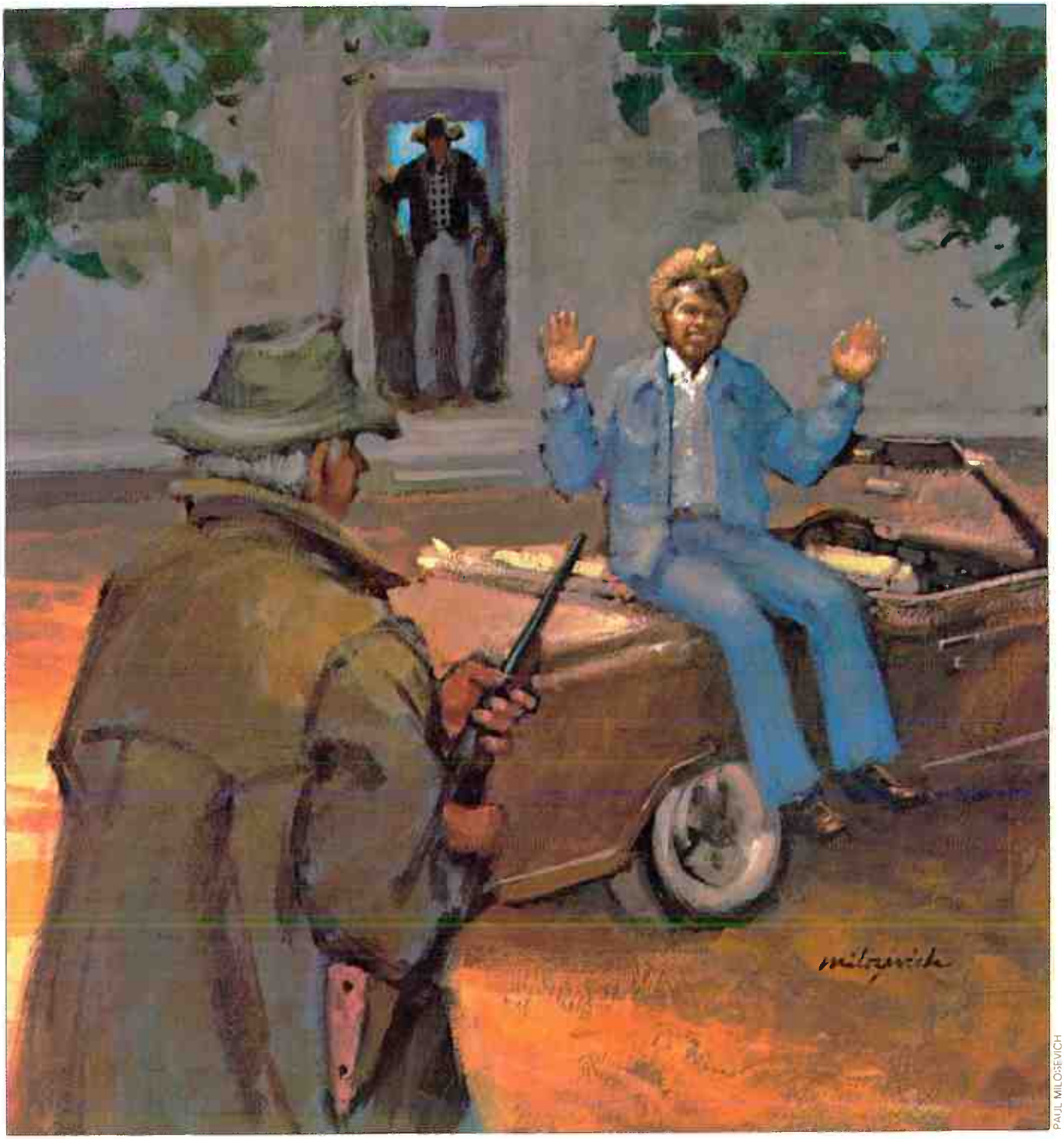
"You know him?"

"We didn't talk. Burns went on, me and the bear went on, and then we all went someplace else."

Mr. Woonzel rubbed his chin and continued. "Fred lives down the road here a piece. If he sees a car he don't know coming this way, he cuts out across the fields and tells 'em I'm dead. Works every time. What they come out here for is mostly to find out if I'm still alive. If Fred tells 'em I ain't, they move right along. Have you read anywhere that I'm dead?"

"No, sir."

Herman Woonzel mused on. "Fred here gets them spring rabbits when they



PAUL MILOSEVICH

come out of the wet weeds. Rabbits don't like wet. They come out on these dirt roads to dry off and he pops 'em."

I nodded my respects to Mr. Fred. "Mr. Woonzel, I guess we'd better talk about country music." Mr. Woonzel squinted his eyes at me and said, "What are you drinkin' there, boy?"

I glanced at the beer in my hand and said, "Beer, sir."

Herman struck a posture of indignation. "Boy, that's what's wrong with country music right there. All this drinking and taking dope and smoking funny smokes and all that stuff. You know what that does to you? Well, I'll tell you. It makes you stupid, it makes the road look wider, it makes women slim up and look sweeter, that stuff'll make you rich, smart and good looking. I know from experience. Had friends who used to do it. Had one fellow used to drink shaving lotion, sixty percent alcohol, played a musical saw, women loved him, he'd get high and smell like a rose. Got pie-eyed a few times and cut himself all to pieces on that saw. Finally got him one with no teeth. People noticed the saw didn't have no teeth and it run him right outa the business. See?"

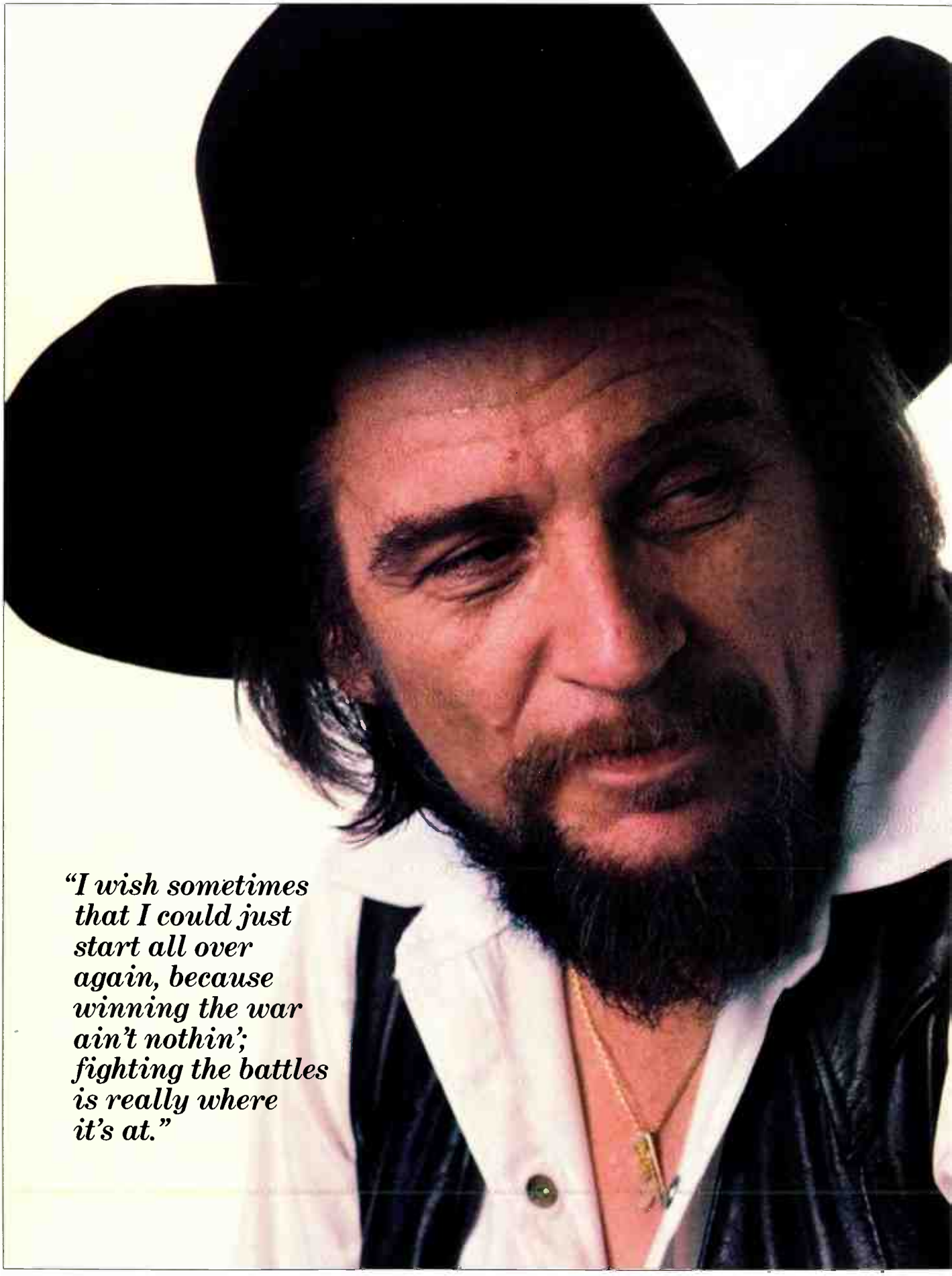
"Well, sir,. . . I, er. . ."

"That's what's wrong with country music, that's where it's goin'. I got Fred here guardin' me against such stuff." And with that, Mr. Woonzel stomped into his house and slammed the door.

I turned to Mr. Fred who was still standing there with the shotgun.

"Since I'm kinda his manager now," Mr. Fred said, "I take them Beanie Weenies and the seventy-five bucks. He's upset right now. Me and him drunk a quart of moonshine last night, and I think he's hung over." ■

Tom T. Hall is a country music singer and songwriter. He frequently does field work for Country Music Magazine.



"I wish sometimes that I could just start all over again, because winning the war ain't nothin'; fighting the battles is really where it's at."

LEONARD KAMSLER

THE FALL AND RISE OF WAYLON JENNINGS

You *do* remember Waylon Jennings, don't you? He's had a hit on the radio again lately, and if that's not enough, think of 1976. Remember the *Wanted: The Outlaws* album, which he made with Willie Nelson and Tompall Glaser and Jessi Colter; it sold several million copies and just about rearranged the whole fabric of modern country music. Remember 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980: sold-out concerts coast-to-coast, seven gold albums, half a dozen other albums which collectively sold about ten million copies, a duet album with Willie and several duet singles which achieved the dizzying heights of the platinum plateau.

That was quite a time for Waylon. After spending most of the 1960s in a blur, exhausting himself mentally and physically by cranking out dozens of albums and touring three hundred days a year, coming home broker than when he left, he turned around one day in the 1970s and realized that he was not only rich, but famous. Suddenly, the money was coming in by the shovelful and going out by the bucketful, and it got to where the money didn't even matter any more. However much he spent, there always seemed to be more of the "have-I-got-a-deal-for-you" people standing in line, wanting to give him more money, offering him five- and six-figure sums to appear in movies he didn't like, endorse products he'd never heard of, and generally make an ass of himself in public. These were offers which lesser men could not have refused, but Waylon (with the possible exception of his agreeing to narrate the "Dukes of Hazzard" TV show) did refuse.

In fact, Waylon made himself *so* unavailable that it almost began to look like he and his musical blood brother Willie Nelson were on a see-saw together: The more visible Willie became and the more he blossomed as a movie star, amateur golfer, media darling and national hero, the more invisible Waylon became. It was almost as if he saw the writing on the wall, and turned and ran from it.

"Yeh, I backed away from it," Waylon admits. "I shrank back from it. Maybe the truth is, I

by Bob Allen

ALLEN WHITMAN

Waylon on his tour bus: endless games of "Farkel" between naps.

was scared by it all. You know, I never really had any ambition to be number one, never really had any goals or anything like that. When it all started happening, I enjoyed watchin' Willie, more than anything else, because he was havin' such a good time with it all. But to be honest, I really didn't understand a lot of it. I really just wanted to play my music, and I didn't give much of a shit about all the rest of it. So I started to withdraw and make myself unavailable. At the time, it was easy to do. I had people in my organization encouraging me to do that."

So for several years we saw little of Waylon Jennings. The rumors, however, flew fast and furious. Some of them concerned Waylon's finances. A number of them were true. Quite simply, Waylon went broke. His records weren't selling the way they used to; all the bucketsful of money were still going out, but they weren't coming in.

"Everything was gone," he recalls. "I had gotten a three million dollar advance from my record company, and that was all gone. I was losing everything I was making on the road, and everything I owned was in hock as deep as it could be. I had people on my payroll who were earning ridiculous amounts of money. I finally had to let everybody know that the party was over, that I was quittin', because I just couldn't go on like that.

"It's funny," he laughs uneasily. "Just a couple of days before I found out how bad it really was, I had been talking to Tony Joe White and I told him, 'You know, I wish sometimes that I could just start all over again, because winning the war ain't nothin'; fighting the battles is really where it's at.' Well, when somebody finally came up to me and told me I was at the end of the line financially, I couldn't help but think about that, think about how. . . sure enough. . . I got my wish!

"But you know what?" he shakes his head. "Even with things in as much of a mess as they were, it really didn't faze me. I remember the day this guy that works for me walked up to me and said: 'Waylon, you're *broke*, and you're so far in debt that there's nothin' left for you to hock.' And I didn't really bat an eye. Jessi was sittin' right there with me, and she didn't hardly bat an eye, either. Then the guy says to me: 'Waylon, do you understand what I'm saying: there's no more money!' And I said, 'Yeh, I heard you the first time, so you don't have to be standin' there, lookin' at me like I'm crazy or somethin'! Because I don't know if *you* know it or not, but I don't give a damn, because that's really not what I'm all about.'

"Really and truly," he says, "I never gave a damn about money, and I still don't."

The fact remains, however, that Waylon's financial situation two years ago was a nasty mess. The mess didn't end there, either: There were also plenty of rumors about his involvement with drugs. Waylon doesn't have a lot to say about that subject, but what he says is important:

"Several of us got into that too heavy. Finally, I just stopped. Everybody was amazed, but I knew I wasn't in control anymore, so I said, 'This is it.' My friends and my wife helped me a lot.

"It's a day-to-day thing. . . always."

If you count the time in the late 1950s when he was kicking around as Buddy Holly's bass player, Waylon has spent two-and-a-half long, rough decades beating his brains out on the concert trail. Now, at nine a.m. on a lovely early summer morning, as new blossoms fill the air with their fragrance and a bulldozer across the street from his large, fenced-in, tree-shrouded Nashville home carves away the green grass to make way for a warehouse or some such thing, the routine begins once again. Waylon's bus sits idling in the driveway, ready to haul him away on another tour.

The Waylon Jennings who finally emerges from the house has obviously just been roused from bed, and is sleepy-eyed and yawning as he hits the bright sunlight. He's a few pounds heavier than the Waylon of a few years ago, and beneath his eyes and under his heavy black beard and the thick dark hair that is matted to his forehead, there are a few extra lines that weren't there before.

He climbs into the bus, and soon he, Jessi and the handful of close friends who make up his small but tightly organized entourage are rolling southward on the Interstate, headed for an evening show somewhere in southern Alabama.

After wolfing down a couple of pieces of buttered cinnamon toast fixed for him by Jessi, Waylon becomes absorbed in an ongoing "farkel" tournament ("farkel" is a dice game invented by Waylon and his crew). Soon the twenty- and fifty-dollar bills are flying. Before Waylon has a chance to lose the first hundred of the day, he starts to doze off right there at the table. After some gentle persuasion from Jessi, he revives himself enough to stumble wearily into the rear sleeping compartment, where he sprawls on the bed and sleeps like a baby. He does not wake up until very late afternoon, just before the bus pulls up at a Holiday Inn at a remote Alabama crossroads.

That day when it dawned on Waylon that he had hit rock bottom with no place else to fall, he did what many a small businessman has been forced to do: He closed the doors to his office, started cutting away some of the dead wood in his organization, and attempted to reorganize his debts. Then, with the dedicated help of a handful of his faithful friends and employees, he set about the long, arduous task of rehabilitating his career.

Now, as late '83 rolls around Waylon once again has the cogs in the great career wheel turning fast and furiously.

He's hitting the concert circuit harder than ever. He's put out two duet albums, one with his old friend Willie Nelson ("He and Willie had a falling out over something there for a while," one member of his inner circle reveals, "but they're just like brothers again now."). He's just finished recording some sides and doing some road shows with his old friend Jerry Reed. He's done some sessions with Hank Williams, Jr. and his hero, Ernest Tubb. Most importantly, he has a solo album of his own, *It's Only Rock N' Roll*, which, though certainly not a landmark effort like his 1975 *Dreaming My Dreams* or his 1976 *Are You Ready for the Country*, is a clear indication that after his last few disappointingly lacklustre studio outings, he is once again on the track.

"As far as that's concerned, I don't pay much attention to it, except that every once in a while, I do feel surges, like things are moving upward," he explains. "And after being at rock bottom like we were, I definitely feel there's a surge right now."

"I shrank back from it. Maybe the truth is, I was scared by it all. You know, I never really had any ambition to be number one."

As Waylon, Jessi, and their faithful circle of friends and bodyguards climb back on the bus for the thirty-minute ride from the Holiday Inn to the open-air pavilion where they are to perform tonight, Waylon fortifies himself with large doses of Rolaids and Vicks Formula 44, hoping to stave off two other lingering evils which come along with twenty-five years in the spotlight: heartburn and sinus congestion.

Around nine p.m., when he finally takes the stage in front of the crowd of several thousand, he has suceeded in smoothing out the last wrinkles of sleepiness and indigestion. He has changed into his standard outfit: black leather vest, black pointy-toed boots, and black flat-brimmed cowboy hat, this last item perched, as always, at a precarious angle. With the customary cigarette clenched tightly between his teeth, he smiles and leads the band into a long set which includes everything from oldies like "Only Daddy That'll Walk The Line" to "Lucille (You Won't Do Your Daddy's Will)", the single from his *It's Only Rock N' Roll* album. When he launches into "Good Hearted Woman" and reaches the part which is sung by Willie Nelson on the record, he holds his nose and performs a comically nasal imitation of the Red Headed Stranger which just tears the audience up. His band supplies a bottom-heavy beat so relentless that it makes your teeth rattle, and here and there Waylon embroiders the beat with his own immaculately raw "chicken pickin'" lead guitar runs.

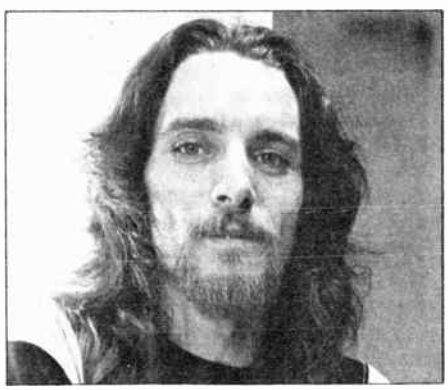
Toward the end of the set, Jessi (who opened the show with her own solo set) comes back out. Looking stunning in a white dress and sounding as powerful as ever, she shares duets with her husband on "Storms Never Last" and a spirited rendition of their recent duet single, "Wild Side Of Life/Honky Tonk Angels". All the while, James Garner, a close friend of Waylon who happened to be in the Southeastern region and decided to fly in to catch the show and visit a while, is skulking around taking pictures with a camera which, sad to say, is not a Polaroid.

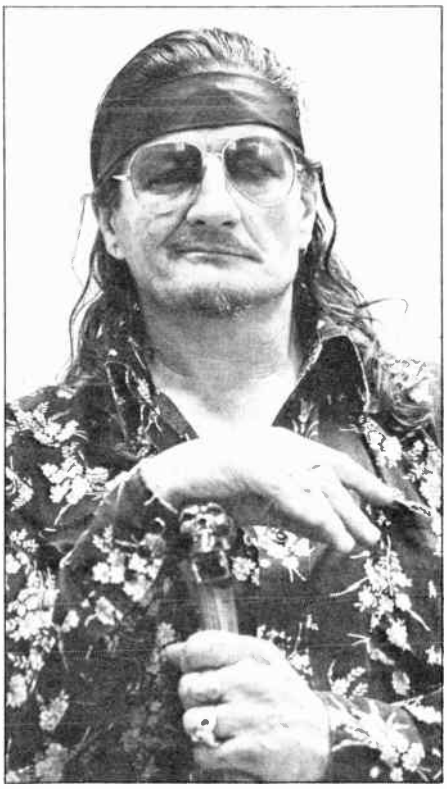
There is something striking about this whole affair: Waylon really seems to be having *fun*. Granted, he's still as nervous as a cat most of the time, but nervousness seems to be a constant in Waylon's personality, and nowdays he laughs a lot. He teases Jessi and kisses her onstage, he tells Dolly Parton jokes, he actually talks to the audience. "Look at me," he laughs at one point. "I'm gettin' old, I'm gainin' weight, and I sound like a frog." The spectacle of Waylon Jennings poking fun at himself onstage is strange, but encouraging.

After the show, and well after midnight, Jim Garner and the crew and Waylon and Jessi are still aboard the bus in a cow pasture behind the show pavilion. It's a sedate enough gathering—Coca Cola and filter-tip cigarettes are the strongest refreshments served—and there are children present. This delights Waylon, who speaks often and with glowing pride of his and Jessi's four-year-old son "Shooter" and the four young grandchildren with whom the older of his seven children have recently blessed him.

At heart, Waylon is a shy and slightly claustrophobic person, in his element only in the midst of a small circle of familiar faces. Here on the bus he laughs and jokes easily, telling delightful anecdotes about his own slightly jaded past—like the time, as a high school football star, when he scored a winning touchdown in a championship game and was carried around the field by his jubilant teammates, who then proceeded to drop him and damn near break his arm.

The merriment continues well into the night. By three a.m., long after the movable party has rolled back to the Holiday Inn and everybody else has drifted off to bed, Waylon and his trusted friend and bodyguard Deakon, a former president of the Oakland, California chapter of the Hells Angels, are sitting alone on the bus, rolling the dice and playing seemingly endless rounds of "farkel".





ALLEN WHITMAN

The crew: Deakon (top), "Boomer" (right), and Waylon's son Terry.

This is the original 1974 article which first introduced the term "Outlaws."

In Defense of the Telecaster Cowboy Outlaws

11/5/73

Dear Terry,

Just a note to tell you I've seen the end of the beginning. I went down to the Disc Jockey convention this year and found out that all those guys we've been depending on for plain talk and hillbilly boogie, all our favorite low riders, lonesome pickers and Telecaster Cowboys, have been herded together, penned up and branded with a lot of dumb names like "Underground Country" and "Progressive Country" and "Hipbillies"! Dear God, I thought when I beheld it, they're talking about Waylon and Willie and Roger and Red and Kris and Billy Joe and Tompall and Kinky and Lee and Mickey and Troy and Townes, and just about everybody else in town without a swimming pool!

Now, as you know, I'm just an old foot-tapper, bottle-thrower and free-lance layabout, and I don't know these guys except by watching and listening. But just by watching and listening I can tell you they're just about the only folks in Nashville who will walk into a room where there's a guitar and a Wall Street Journal, and pick up the guitar. And, for my money, the only label worth hanging comes from Roger "Captain Midnight" Schutt (Chief of all the free-lance layabouts in Music City). He calls them "the first of the last real cowboys," and that makes some sense, especially since the only thing most of these guys have in common is that they were born country on the west side of the Mississippi and often forget to go watery in the knees at the mention of Jeff Davis.

Anyway, they were really getting the press and attention this year, and I wouldn't begrudge them a drop of ink, but something kinda sad happens when what used to be new becomes news, when a bunch of typewriters start trying to express in four paragraphs what a bunch of musicians have spent most of their lives trying to put into music. But what a spectacle it was! You should have been there. First we have all these tie-dyed rock-and-roll journalists in their Bloomingdale denims and tres chic T-shirts telling us how these guys are "with it" so it's okay to like them and play their records in the dorm. And then we have all these double-knit Cadillac country boys telling us how they're a bunch of dope fiends who wouldn't recognize the Reverend Snow if he drove through town in an air-conditioned fiery chariot.

I'll tell you, Terry, I didn't know what to make of it. All I kept remembering was the first time I heard "Me and Bobby McGee":

Billy Joe and Tompall heading for a Bloody Mary

MARSHALL FALLWELL

50 miles from Fort Worth and an hour before dawn, dragging a trailer and driving with my head out the window, hoping the cold wind in my face would keep me awake. Then old Roger came zinging in there with "Busted flat in Baton Rouge..." and I thought, "That's the best first line of a song I've ever heard." By the time the song was over I felt like the leading edge of a Tokyo Turn-

From Country Music Magazine, January, 1974.

around. I was up so high not even David Houston could bring me down, and I went floating on into Fort Worth, sliding thru the outskirts just as the light from the winter dawn and the street lamps were in perfect balance and the whole wide morning was glowing with shadowless gray-pink light. A lovely thing to see with "Busted flat in Baton Rouge..." running through your head and tapping your boot. "Underground?" "Progressive?" I'd say just about as underground as Highway 80 and as progressive as a White Freight Liner...just about as sophisticated as five strands of bob-wire. I couldn't believe they were talking about the guys who had made those midnight white-lines roll so sweet, made those Bloody Mary mornings flow so easy...that's music for going overland, son, not underground.

Waylon and Kinky Friedman staying close to how they are.

And all the time this Manhattan Hillbilly with his hair in an Upper-West-Side-Natural was telling me how Willie Nelson was a lot like Stephen Stills, I kept thinking of Billy Joe Shaver's line about "moving's the closest thing to being free." And while this D.J. from Tulsa (who looked like a counselor at a Hi-Y camp) was talking about how Waylon wasn't really country, I was remembering the time you and I got wrecked in L.A. and went and saw old Waylon at the Palomino. Not a sober man or a sissy in the house, and one old high plains cowboy up on the stage in his rough-out boots, hunched over "chicken-picking" some old Telecaster that looked like it was bought at a rummage sale. This guy, according to our friend from Tulsa, ain't as country as some yo-yo sitting in his plastic office with his expando-belt golf slax, Banlon shirt and forty dollar haircut, smelling like a men's cologne ad, worrying about the mortgage on his ranchette out in Hendersonville.

You know, I really felt naive around all those guys talking about chart positions and percentage overrides. I never would have thought it, but it turns out I believed all those old songs like "Crystal Chandeliers," and "Mansion on the Hill," and "Pick Me Up On Your Way Down." I hate being poor worse than Mondays, and I think going hungry is about as good for you as a politician's promise, but still I can't help believing that staying close to how you are is more important than all the shiny equipment and manicured lawns that go to prove you're a star.

Anyway, if I'da had to listen to that percentage talk much longer I'da been 33 with a bullet, so I went back to the room and banged on my old Gibson. And sitting there, up on the fifth floor, watching Saturday night turn into Sunday morning, I found myself wondering if the ghost of old Andrew Jackson ever watched those well-fed defenders of poor man's music driving by his house on their Hydramatic way from church to the golf course. I know that's a real six o'clock in the morning thought, but I bet if you did find the ghost of "Old Hickory" leaning on the fence one Sunday morning, he might allow that, however bad his timing, Davey Crockett had the right idea going to Texas.

Going back to Texas has sure been good for Willie Nelson. You get the impression that when he was living in Nashville he was sending out his songs like a stranded man sends out messages in bottles, and that when he moved to Austin, he suddenly discovered that all those bottles had floated to shore among friends. Anyway he came back to the Convention this year with some scalps on his belt and a gleam in his eye.

By accident of being in the right bar at the right time, I got to tag along to the party that was held after the Nashville Songwriters Association banquet, at which Willie was inducted into the Hall of Fame, and found myself sitting in a room with a few million dollars' worth of songwriting talent. To steal a line from Scott Fitzgerald, I felt like Donald Duck pencilled into da Vinci's "Last Supper." It was a very heavy

DAVE McNEELY

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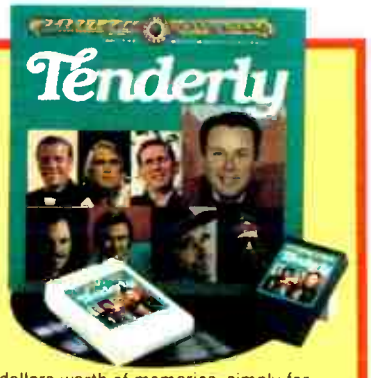

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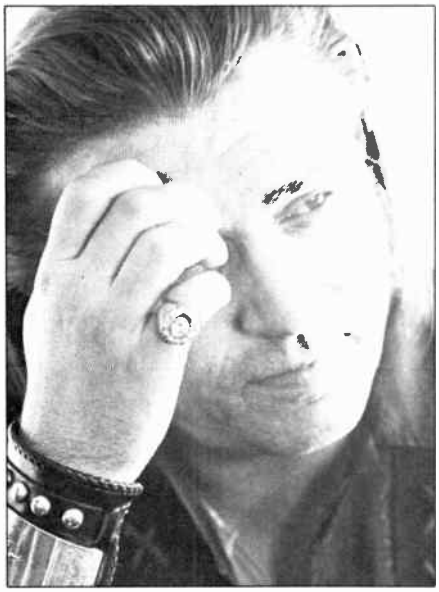

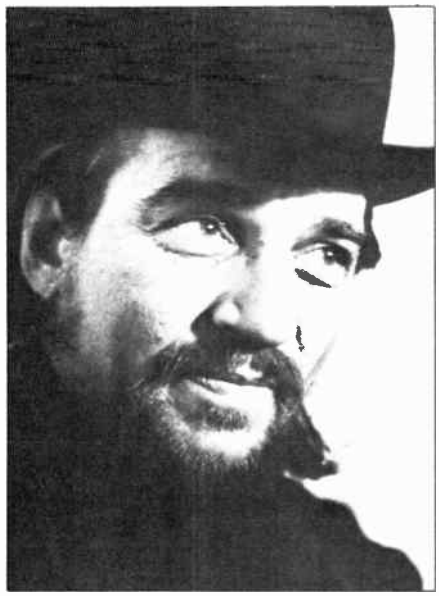

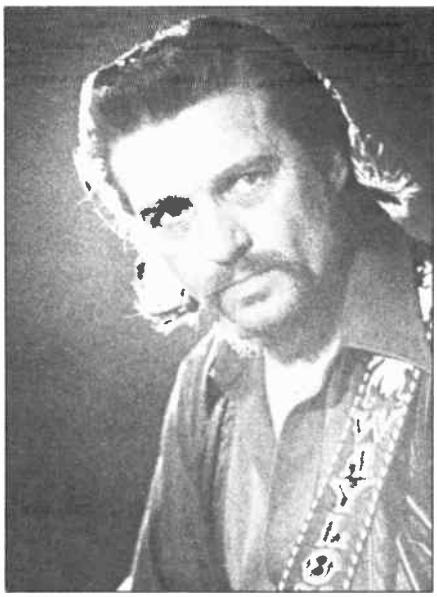

You ever notice how ole Waylon keeps changin'?

crowd and not particularly sedate, until Willie walked up on the stage and started singing, and things got quiet. The best was singing to the best. Willie started singing his hits, each one greeted with applause, "Funny How Time Slips Away," "Night Life," "Me and Paul" ...and as hit followed hit the applause began to be accompanied by heads shaking in open-mouthed amazement as the men in the room began to realize just how many great songs Willie had written. Guys were slumped back in their chairs with silly incredulous grins on their faces. A voice from the audience said, "Hell, Willie, what didn't you write?" and Willie just kept on playing "Pretend I Never Happened." Not very likely. "Bloody Mary Morning," and Willie had got hold of an electric guitar and was playing an extended lead guitar break. More shaking of heads.

Then he started into new songs, and as the lines rolled out, snapping together with a frightening simplicity, spontaneous applause broke out during the songs, a great phrase, a good hook, a blunt truth. This was professional applause, and the best kind of praise... the kind that comes from men who understand the difficulty of what is being done with such apparent ease. In one short pause, Mentor Williams, one of the best young songwriters around, author of "Drift Away," leaned across the table and said "How old is Willie?" When I said, "About 40," Mentor shook his head in despair and said, "I guess it takes that long." And Willie, he just kept playing. Standing up there with his trimmed beard, looking more like a Viennese doctor than a songwriter, singing the stone country truth, and every once in a while you would see a little flicker of a satisfied smile around the edges of his mouth. Behind him on the drums, Paul English was rapping out the beat and grinning like a vampire in a blood bank. Even smiling, Paul qualifies as the most sinister drummer in American popular music, and in Willie's band he doesn't look out of place at all.

I couldn't help think about Willie's band 24 hours later when a friend of mine who had an invitation took me out to a party which was being held at the home of one of the music biggies in Nashville, unnamed here because they seemed to be gracious and gentle people. Chester and I drove into the immaculate wilds of Nashville suburbia to find a well-lit pillared home standing on a rise of graceful lawn. We parked in the street and it didn't take us more than ten minutes to walk up the driveway to the house. The host and hostess greeted us at the door, very charming, giving no hint that we were the only people at the party without crushproof clothing. We got a drink and some hors d'oeuvres and started looking for an ash tray. Wandering through the crowd, the conversation was evenly split between the World Series and conversations about money which hovered around six figures. Now, growing up in Fort Worth, you

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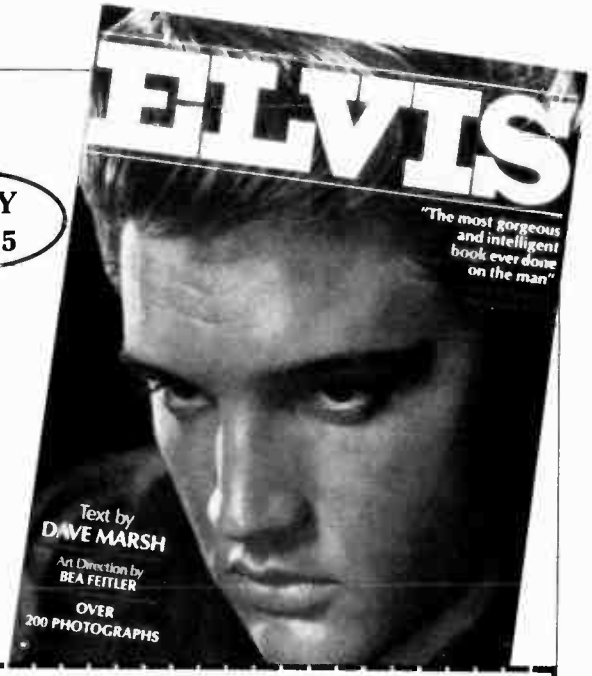

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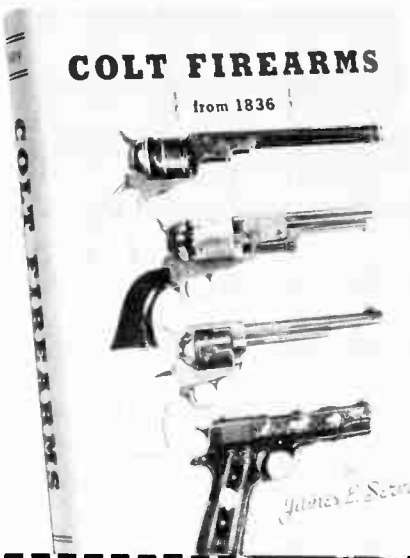

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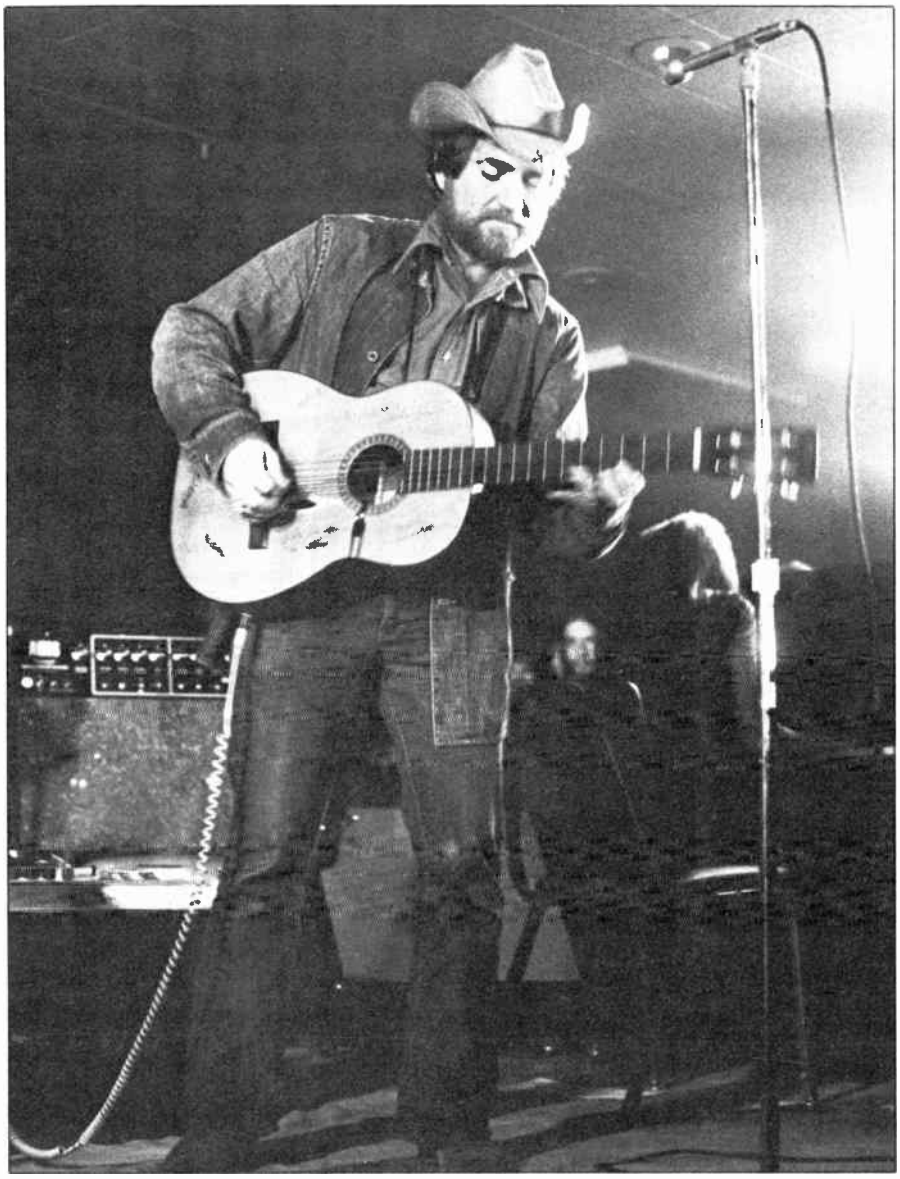

MARSHALL FALLWELL

Here's a picture of Willie in his Sunday best.

do learn how to balance a plate on your knee, so that wasn't what was making me nervous. I retired to an oak-panelled corner to contemplate my nervousness. It wasn't my lack of an invitation, since the last invitation I received was to my high school graduation. Then I realized that it was the whole house itself. Every girl I ever dated whose parents didn't approve of me lived in a house just like this. I had balanced plates on my knee in houses like this before, mistaken Wedgewood dishes for ash trays. Then Chet and I started trying to imagine Willie or Waylon at a party like this, and if it hadn't been so sad it would have been hilarious.

I think it was at that moment that I realized why two gentle people like Willie and Waylon would be considered outlaws in Nashville, where recording artists are generally treated as in-laws. There were a couple of artists there at the party, in loafers and pull-over sweaters, smiling the way you do when your deaf great aunt is lecturing you on world affairs. The moment it was polite we excused ourselves, feeling genuine respect for the host and hostess and wishing to God we had had our teeth capped.

We drove to the concert at the Sheraton Hotel, where Troy Seals, Sammi Smith, Willie Nelson, and Waylon Jennings were playing. The crowd was incredible. Neil Reshin and Sam Uretsky had done a publicity overkill and had attracted about 6,000 people to a room that accommodated 2,500, so there was some jostling. I saw Troy's set, went out for some air and didn't get back in until Waylon was playing. The crowd was a fantastic mix of music business New Yorkers in their white-on-white shirts, redneck deejays not knowing just how to respond, rock-and-roll journalists who said "Wow, man" a lot, and every long-haired country musician in existence: the boys from Asleep at the Wheel, Commander Cody Frayne, Guy Clark, Jerry Jeff Walker, Kinky Friedman, Mentor Williams, Dobie Gray and Tom Jans, author of Gray's new hit, "Loving Arms," Will Jennings, who writes with Troy Seals and escaped from the University of Texas about the time I did, and John Bettis, who wrote Lynn Anderson's "Top of the World," as well as that California classic, "Leader of the Pack." All these, in addition to a healthy contingent of disc jockeys who arrived early, sat straight in their chairs, paid attention and responded with surprising enthusiasm to the show.

And Waylon did a good show; it wasn't the Palomino but it was damn good, and the tightness and enthusiasm of Waylon's band was, as always, infectious. It was a good moment for everybody concerned, and it wasn't until the end of the show that you saw the real change. As the crowd began to empty out, I saw the definitive sign of the end of the beginning. The pop-journalists and hangers-on were moving around the emptying hall whispering in one another's ear, everyone trying to make sure they ended up at the correct after-party. The pecking order was

being established. It was a scene I was used to after rock concerts in L.A. and New York, but to my knowledge this was the first time I had seen it in Nashville. It meant that our boys had made it, but it also meant that Nashville was no longer a safe place for us laid-back lay-abouts.

Guess this might be the end of the beginning...

At the Pancake Man afterwards, I was having coffee and listening to a conversation at the next table. A fellow with razor-cut gray hair and a plaid silk-and-wool jacket was discussing Charlie Rich's sweep of the CMA awards. I don't know who he was. Anyway, he leaned across the table and pointed a manicured finger at his companion and said, "I'll tell you what, Charlie Rich would have been a superstar 15 years ago if he hadn't gotten interested in music."

I'd heard that riff before, "It's hard to score if you fall in love." Somehow I knew it was time to take the advice of the Marshall Tucker Band and "take the highway." Hope to see you in Texas real soon, and until then I remain.

yours truly,
Dave Hickey.

Video Country

Cable TV shows like The Nashville Network and CMTV are providing an outlet for country music never seen before.

After years of talk, talk and more talk, country music has come to television—and with a vengence. Not your once or twice a year awards shows or the obligatory Christmas/New Year/Halloween special, either, with three country singers and the female lead of a soap opera dancing to a Las Vegas production number.

Rather, the continued success of cable television in reaching specialized markets—plus the spectacular success of Music Television (MTV)—has bought a country music gleem to the eyes of cable operators. Already, two country music-oriented services are offered on the cable. One, the ambitious and expensive Nashville Network, launched by the Nashville-based conglomerate WSM, offers a whole slate of country-style entertainment, from game shows to concerts. The other, Country Music Television (CMTV), provides 24 hours of video "clips," the television equivalent of a radio station playing the hits.

Perhaps more importantly, the existence of outlets for country video material has triggered an avalanche of television production in Nashville. Everybody seems to be working on a "video," and if they're not, they're on the verge of forcing their record company to start one.

"In all candor, we feel that the beginning of The Nashville Network is the most significant thing to happen to country music since the founding of the Grand Ole Opry," says Tom Adkinson of The Nashville Network. "What we're talking about here is a huge new market for the music."

In terms of sheer numbers, Adkinson might be correct. While a country album that sells 250,000 copies is considered a success, The Nashville Network *began* its life on March 7th, 1983, with seven *million* subscribers, the largest number of subscribers ever for a start-up cable venture.

The Nashville Network is indeed a network, featuring game shows, comedy (including "cable's first country situation comedy," *I-40 Paradise*—apparently nobody had heard about *The Dukes Of Hazzard*), sports shows, interviews and tons of country music.

Riders In The Sky (Doug Green, Too Slim & Woody Paul) on Tumbleweed Theatre.

We're not music, music, music," Adkinson says, "but we are Nashville, Nashville, Nashville."

The Nashville Network is designed to be part of the basic service offered by cable television companies, he says, rather than a pay service like Home Box Office or Showtime. Revenues will come from advertising. Already such national accounts as Chevrolet have signed up.

"We have a very good track record for show productions," Adkinson says. "We're good at it, and we have the experience. Also, a diverse network of programs gives us a lot of lattitude, a lot of diversity—not just music."

Although it's too early to call any hits just yet, Adkinson mentions that the game show *Fandango*, hosted by Bill Anderson, and the musical *Nashville Now* seem strong favorites in viewer response.

Another of the more successful shows is *Bobby Bare And Friends*, a songwriter showcase hosted by Bobby Bare and featuring the likes of Tom T. Hall, Chet Atkins, Hank Cochran, Steve Goodman, David Allan Coe, Roger Miller, Mel Tillis, Guy Clark and literally dozens of other renowned songwriters.

"Oh, it's just a bunch of people I know sitting around and bullshitting about songs," says Bobby Bare. "It's not anything new—we've been doing it for twenty years. It's just that now, we're doing it on television."

The Nashville Network, he says, gives the country music listener a chance to learn more about the music.

"Actually, the stars of the show are the songs," Bare says. "When the songwriters sing these great songs and then talk about them, people have a chance to find out something they didn't know. This is something a lot of us have been wanting to do for a long time. I mean, it's definitely not a showbusiness show, 'cause I'm surely not a talk-show host. We want it to be like the camera eavesdropping on conversations."

For Bare, the rise of country music video represents a major break in the relationship between records and radio. "Now there's another outlet for music," he says.

The rise of country music video has been linked to the phenomenal success of Music Television, the advertising-supported cable television channel launched by Warner Amex in late 1981. At first, MTV seemed like an interesting novelty at a time when the business could use any novelty it could get. Record sales were down, and, more importantly, public interest seemed down as well. Radio was dominated by old acts doing old music, and nobody seemed to care one way or the other.

MTV, though, brought a new dimension to music, essentially providing a video radio station, complete with video disk jockeys (VJ's, of course) and music news. MTV ran video clips—or "videos," as they were called—provided by the record companies. The videos could be as simple as a piece of a performance or as complicated as a mini-movie. The mini-movies, "concept videos," were enor-

by Michael Bane

mously successful, helping break new acts that had not found a place on radio.

Suddenly, MTV was a power to be reckoned with. MTV acts soared to the top of the rock charts—MTV is aggressively rock, turning down, in fact, a video on Rosanne Cash—and, more importantly, the videos seemed to light a fire under the flagging rock market, bringing an energy back to the music. MTV currently reaches some twelve million homes, and continues to grow rapidly.

The closest thing to MTV in country music is presently centered in Hendersonville, Tennessee, a few minutes from Nashville. Country Music Television is a joint venture by Video World International of Nashville, Telstar Corp. of Beverly Hills, and an investment banking company in Denver. CMTV began its service at the same time as The Nashville Network, but that's where the similarity ends. CMTV airs clips—videos—of songs, which CMTV's Glenn Daniels has been assembling for over two years.

"A lot of people thought we were crazy when we started shooting video clips," Daniels says. "We're putting a lot of eggs into one basket, betting that video is the answer to slumping record sales. One thing we know is that video is the perfect way to market music."

CMTV began without fanfare, beaming its programming up to a satellite from a dish antenna outside their offices. The service quickly lined up two million households, a number which quickly grew to five million.

"We have in excess of five thousand video segments," he says, "estimated at a value of ten million dollars. About 25% of the videos we're now using on the satellite transmission are from record companies, including CBS, RCA and Warner Brothers."

CMTV features videos in a Top 100 format, with such special events as concerts and a limited number of regular shows. Like MTV, chart position determines whether a song is going to get heavy CMTV play.

"We're in the infancy stage and we're crawling," says Daniels, the founder of CMTV. "I think we'll be more than walking in ninety days."

For the country music artists, the appeal of the mini-movie conceptual videos is powerful indeed. "All the artists want conceptual video," says Daniels.

While the artists and the video networks seem very enthusiastic, the record companies flinch away from a wholesale commitment to the new medium.

"Sure, we're convinced there is a future for country music video," says Jerry Bailey, who handles video production for MCA Records. "But we just don't think that it's time for the record companies to go into the television production business."

Judi Kriss, manager of electronic media for RCA, who has produced videos on Ronnie Milsap, Dolly Parton, Alabama and Sylvia, stresses another point: Country music video is never going to have the impact on country that MTV had on rock. "It's a different audience," she says, "and it's an audience that's just starting to emerge."

COURTESY THE NASHVILLE NETWORK

Bobby Bare and Lacy J. Dalton on his cable show.

"Video is just not selling a bundle of records for country artists right now," says Bailey. "We know it's having an impact, but not a million-dollar impact."

Of all the companies, CBS Records is probably the most committed to video, boasting of huge sums of money being dumped into the video mill. Warner Brothers, on the other hand, does not yet have a person in Nashville to handle video, although plans are in the works.

"We've got about 75 promotional videos in our library," says Mary Anne McCready, CBS's Director of Product Development. "We had the best country video on the first annual American Video Awards this year for Merle Haggard's *Are The Good Times Really Over.*"

According to McCready, it's impossible to say whether or not a particular video helped sales.

"The only things we're positive have an effect on record sales are airplay and good availability and placement of the record in the stores," she says. "We believe that record sales are a combination of everything."

CBS, the first label to become extensively involved with video, works with producers in Nashville, Los Angeles, Austin and New York to produce both concert and concept videos, with a few, such as the Haggard video, displaying a little of both.

"There are 18 national cable programs, 130 clubs, 600 college campuses and 73 local and regional cable programs that use videos. Taken together, the market is phenomenal," she adds. "But you don't know who's got the television on."

Despite this caution on the part of the record companies, private production outfits are gearing up to fill the expected demand for programming. The viewer should not expect the kind of big-budget productions seen on MTV, where a conceptual video can cost between $100,000 and $250,000. The top end of country productions right now seems to be around $25,000, and that's the *very* top end. CMTV is offering its own production facilities to record companies to produce concept video at cost, a deal that Daniels feels sure will generate even more quality programming material.

One thing is for certain: More and more country acts are going to be using television to sing their songs. The Nashville Network, though committed to the show format, is waiting for a large enough body of videos to become available before making a decision on their own video show.

CMTV is getting ready to build a slick new 40,000 square foot facility, with ten separate sound stages and a large auditorium—"With a stage as big as the Grand Ole Opry," Daniels says proudly.

Meanwhile, video cameras are blossoming all over Nashville. ■

As we went to press, we learned that *Country Music Television*, previously known as CMTV, is now called CMTN.

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Johnny Snowman
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Winter Wonderland
Rudolph The Red Nose Reindeer
Happy The Christmas Clown
Silver Bells
Ding-A-Ling, The Christmas Bell
Kids
Here Comes Santa Claus
The Night Before Christmas
Silent Night

Produced by Conway Twitty and Dee Henry for Twitty Bird Productions, Inc.
Produced and Recorded by Jimmy Bowen and Ron Treat for Jimmy Bowen Productions, Inc.

Record Reviews

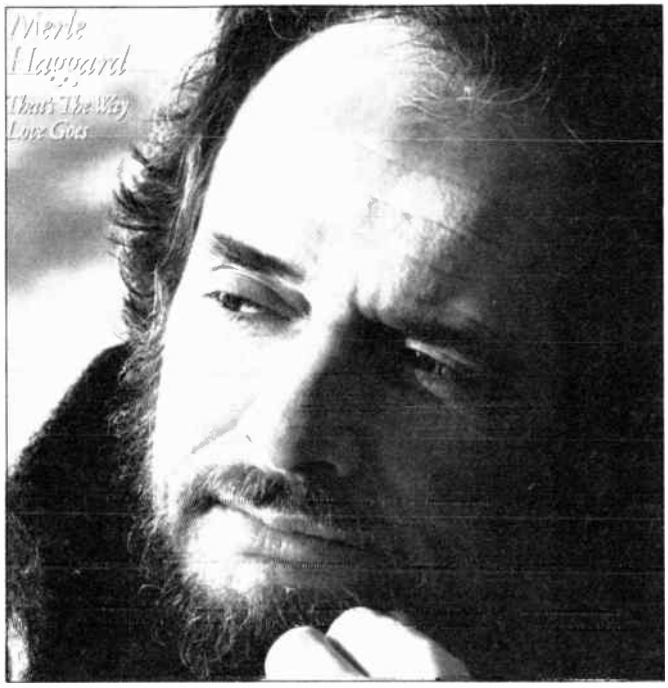
Merle Haggard
That's The Way Love Goes
Epic FE38815

So. Merle Haggard is divorcing again. If you don't believe that he and Leona Williams, after several trial separations and reconciliations, are finally through, look in the newspapers. And if you don't believe the papers, listen to this troubled and troubling album. It will give you one side of the story at least, for like most Haggard albums, it is something of a diary. Haggard, as usual, reveals his share of universal truths, but most of the truths found in his songs wind up being about Merle Haggard himself.

Which makes for a pretty complicated package. Also as usual, Haggard's emotions are too complex, his feelings too contradictory, to be easily pigeon-holed and wrapped up in three-minute songs. He is frustrated, ambivalent, proud, disgusted, hurt, mocking, defiant, stoic, resigned, satisfied, hopeful, pessimistic, committed, full of self-pity.

Complementing his mood is the musical tone of the album. It is, in a word, funereal. There are no uptempo songs, no novelty songs, and no honky tonk shouters. The songs are all slow, and they proceed one after the other until, inevitably, Haggard has dragged you down to his wavelength. This is musical quicksand, and even when it's good (which isn't all the time), it is not much fun to listen to.

For me, three songs in particular carry the album. I'll save one of them, the title song, for last. "What Am I



Gonna Do (With the Rest of My Life)" opens with a doom-laden bass pounding the theme home. The song captures that moment when you realize that the anguish you are feeling is not going to be gotten out of your system very fast, when you know that no solution but time will work, and time will not pass quickly enough.

On "Love Will Find You," he's telling his ex to give in and come back because love is never blind and it can't be escaped, so there's no point in trying to get away from it. He says this with so much trepidation, however, that I wonder who he's talking to—his ex or himself—and whether he's even sure about what he's saying.

The rest of the album is even more confusing. "(I'm Gonna Paint Me) A Bed of Roses" is wistful, a song about what could have been. "Don't Seem Like We've Been Together All Our Lives" seems overly sentimental next to the other songs, with Haggard perhaps indulging again in wishful thinking about how things might have been in a more perfect world (though a jabbing, bluesy guitar coda arrives just in time to puncture his myth-making). On "Carryin' Fire" Merle pledges eternal love and support, while "The Last Boat of the Day" is surprisingly sweet, but "If You Hated Me" is a real finger-pointer, asserting quite seriously that nobody could treat him so badly yet still claim to love him. But why, exactly, is that impossible? Hag is the first to admit (in "I Think I'll Stay") that he himself has been known to do something similar, that his own restlessness can needlessly hurt others.

If these songs are confusing, then "Someday When Things Are Good" is an emotional disaster area from any point of view. The singer argues that he and his woman are only happy when they are *un*happy; when the relationship is going well they have to split up, because his woman likes her idealized memories of him better than the reality of him in the present. One wonders what the woman in question might have to say about this—as one does during several other songs, for Haggard is so busy expressing his own thoughts that he never acknowledges anything she might have said to him—but there is much genuine pain here, much hurt and bewilderment. Unfortunately, the whole affair descends into self-pity a little too easily.

No matter how much turmoil and conflict Haggard may feel in his head and heart, though, he and his musicians remain in complete control of their craft. The band sound is absolutely harmonious, right down to the smart horn obligatos Don Markham plays off Haggard's voice. Overall, the style is as Western as it is country, and Haggard even appropriates a couple of Willie Nelson's trademark guitar riffs here and there. And has anyone else noticed how skillfully he weaves electric piano into the country ensemble sound, using it almost as a cushion for the rest of the band?

Merle's singing is as diverse as he's ever put on an album. Hear his voice flatten out the word "life" on "Someday When Things are Good"; hear him sink to a whisper on "Carryin' Fire"; hear him stretch out the word "leave" on "I Think I'll Stay"; hear him break and snap words in any number of other places, and you'll realize that Haggard can get away with an album like this because he's one of the few singers who have enough vocal chops to

Record Reviews

make the contradictions mesh.

The contradictions are here, after all, because they are also present in real life, mine and yours as well as his. That's why, for me, the title song remains the capper. It is (along with "I Never Go Around Mirrors") one of the two greatest songs Lefty Frizzell wrote and recorded shortly before his death nearly a decade ago. The irony, of course, is that Haggard began his career as a shameless Frizzell imitator, but while he sings this song of bitter acceptance with a nod towards Lefty, he never apes him. And at the very end, he lets out a soft, weary moan that wasn't there in Lefty's version. It's completely spontaneous, that moan, and all by itself, it will tell you everything you need to know these days about Merle Haggard's life and art. —JOHN MORTHLAND

Waylon Jennings
Waylon & Company
RCA AHL1-4826

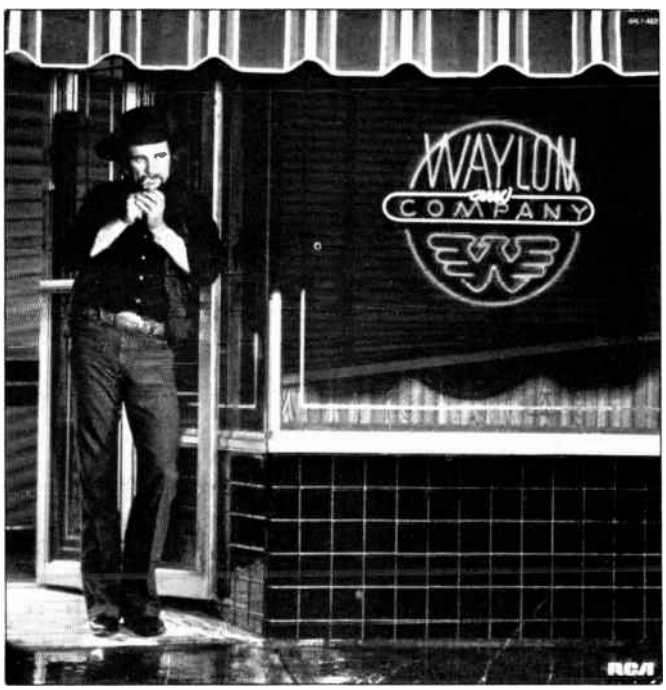
Hank Williams, Jr.
Man Of Steel
Warner Brothers 23924

I don't know about you, but I tend to regard my record collection as a kind of nonprescription drug cabinet. If I'm looking for some justification or reinforcement for the way I feel, or just for some company, I head for the popular music section. To actually *change* the way I feel, the heavier stuff is required (Beethoven, Mozart, etc.), but even then there's no guarantee it's going to work, so I usually opt for sympathy rather than therapy when I head for my music stash.

As a result, when I go looking for a particular record, the way I "feel" is a pretty good indicator of what the record is "about"—in an emotional sense. So from now on, when I'm feeling tired, angry, betrayed, and confused but still unrepentant, I'll probably be digging around among my aural narcotics for Hank Williams, Jr.'s *Man of Steel* album, or for Waylon Jennings's *Waylon & Company.* Hank, Jr.'s album "swings" a little better and Waylon's "sings" a little better, and both of them sound a little bitter, but neither one of them feels the least complacent, which makes them good company for those nights when you're burning the candle at both ends and still can't see the nose in front of your face.

Someday, in fact, historians of American popular music are sure to find that these records, and a number of others like them, are the most vivid testimonies to the pressures of adapting American rural music to the realities of mass culture, for in both of these albums we are confronted with artists trying to honor a tradition of music and somehow evade a tradition of victimization. As a result, both albums seem to circle around the myth and reality of Hank Williams, the most celebrated musician and most flagrant victim of the lifestyle which simultaneously seems to damn and ennoble that music. *Waylon and Company* includes "Leave Them Boys Alone (To Sing Their Song)," sung by Waymore, Bocephus, and Ernest Tubb, and "The Conversation," in which Waylon and Hank, Jr. discuss the ironies and triumphs of Hank Sr.'s career. Hank Jr.'s album confronts the problem of living up to the tradition you're trying to live down in the title cut, "Man of Steel," while taking a more contemporary hero/victim, George Jones, as an example to be lived up to—but not emulated—in "Now I Know How George Feels."

Both albums also redefine their authors' musical scope and roots with selected cover material and "guest" artists. Both albums acknowledge their individual debt to now-unfashionable Memphis rhythm and blues; Hank, Jr.'s by the inclusion of Tony Joe White's "It Just Don't Get It No More," and Waylon's by the inclusion of "Hold On, I'm Coming," a duet with Jerry Reed, and "So You Want to Be a Cowboy Singer," a duet with Tony Joe White *hisself.* Both albums also pay homage to folk tradition; Hank, Jr.'s with his own mountain ballad, "Queen of My Heart," and an electrified version of "Orange Blossom Special," and Waylon's with his touching duet with Emmylou Harris on "Spanish Johnny," Willa Cather's version of the old cowboy ballad collected by John Lomax.



The only real divergence in tone between the two albums is pretty much a matter of timing and format. At this point in his career, Waylon has chosen to emphasize his limited sympathy with current Nashville music by inviting borderline mavericks Jerry Reed and Mel Tillis to sing along with Waymore, while Hank, Jr. seems more inclined to define his "sound" in a context of contemporary "pop" and "rock" music by including Albert Hammond's and Lee Hazlewood's great pop standard, "The Air That I Breathe," and "Midnight Rider." Gregg Allman's signature tune (which Waylon has also recorded); this homage to "Dixie rock" is further reinforced on *Man of Steel* by "Woman on the Run," a minor rocker which is built on a sort of cub-scout version of Lynyrd Skynrd's riff from "Sweet Home Alabama."

Even though these ventures outside the "country" mainstream may make both albums "sound" a little different from your run-of-the-charts Nashville album, they are the very cuts which make the albums "feel" the most positive, amidst the anger and confusion which puts such an aggressive edge on the music. The source of the anger and confusion is all too obvious, and, in a way, it betrays an innocence on the part of both Hank, Jr. and Waylon which would be touching if it didn't hurt so much. Both of them obviously felt that all that was required to gain "acceptance" by the powers-that-be in Nashville was "success"—i.e. "hit records"—only to discover, having made "hit records," that this wasn't the case at all; that somehow, both of them had made "hit records" but in the "wrong way."

It must have been a real surprise to both of them to discover that the people who seemed to be cold professionals, valuing nothing but product, were actually closet moralists themselves, men who

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Record Reviews

only valued success which reinforced their particular view of "country music" and its moral ramifications. But regardless of how disillusioning this discovery must have been to Waylon and Hank, Jr., it's very reassuring to hear them responding to this cold truth with so much grit and vitality and will to survive. However nice it is to hear Willie Nelson singing from the safe relaxing niche he's found for himself, it's great to find Waylon and Hank, Jr. still out in the cold, out on the road, fighting with it, trying to find some kind of musical statement which feels good and means something too. —DAVE HICKEY

Johnny Cash

Johnny 99
Columbia FC 38696

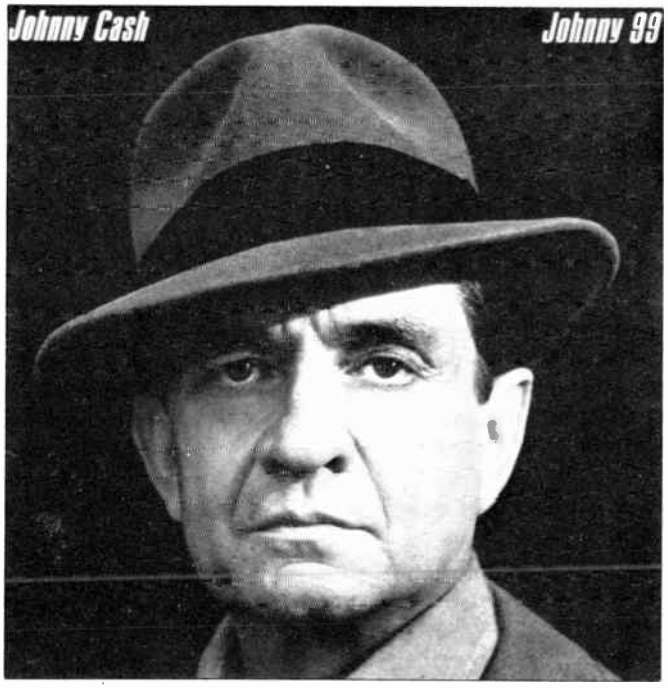
You always have to wonder about a new Cash album, for the man *is* unpredictable. Following his magnificent and muscular *Rockabilly Blues* album, for instance, he hopped off down to Music Row to cut *The Baron* with Billy Sherrill, a venture into the utterly mundane which he explained by saying that working with Sherrill was something he'd never tried before. People like myself who had taken *Rockabilly Blues* to mean that Cash would never make another compromised album (as in "The real Johnny Cash is back!") were left looking something less than authoritative by this move, and so, never again. And given that his last major effort, *The Adventures of Johnny Cash* (co-starring the great producer Jack Clement) was as wonderful in the clear-cut country-folk vein as *Rockabilly Blues* was in the hard-bop blues/rock/country/Cash-invented-this sphere, you have to be doubly suspicious about *Johnny 99*.

Well, not to worry. This time out, Cash took himself back to producer Brian Ahern (who cut the *Silver* anniversary album) for a dose of superlatively tasteful stylistic eclecticism, and everything worked out. Ahern is a highly intelligent, unobtrusive producer, and Cash, when he's thinking right, is no dummy either.

The album kicks off, appropriately enough, with an absolute masterpiece, "Highway Patrolman." In the song, Cash is a cop with a brother, Frankie, who's no good. You can probably imagine the complications of the story in this story song...Cash chasing Frankie's taillights, doing about 110 through Michigan County after a bleeding incident, thinking about "me and Frankie laughing and drinking/ Nothin' feels better than blood on blood"... but unless you've heard it you can't imagine the naked skill of the lyrics, or Cash's delivery, or Ahern's deadly light support. Bruce Springsteen wrote the song, and Cash's daughter Rosanne suggested it; it's the kind of song which literary critics would praise as "great folk poetry," and somehow it conjures up all the old (and true) romance and dignity of Cash-the-outlaw's-champion, Cash-the-common-man. So, for that matter, does "Johnny 99," another Springsteen song about injustice and misunderstanding and how the little guy gets the shaft.

There's lots of this feeling on *Johnny 99*, much evidence of real morality and absolute honesty and accurate observation of detail, the clever nailing of times and places and situations. Guy Clark's "New Cut Road" nails the westward expansion of this country's first settlers with dry/wry humor, while Bobby Borchers's and Mack Vickery's "God Bless Robert E. Lee" twists the "Look Away, Dixie" theme towards a different and impeccably moral conclusion, the kind of point which Cash always strives to make. Then, of course—this being an eclectic album—there's also Paul Kennerley's "That's The Truth," a most amusing oompah tune (great oompah chorus, boys!) which sounds kind of like what might happen if you threw Cash, Alan Toussaint, Chuck Berry, the Jordanaires and the nearest guitar band into the studio, locked the doors, and left them in there to work it out between them. Reminds you, in case you'd forgotten, that Cash likes to have his fun too. There's also a swell anti-boss folk song from the Islands ("Joshua Gone Barbados"), a love-song duet with June Carter which succeeds better than most, and a cut of "I'm Ragged But I'm Right" which just plain kicks it.

So yes, never fear: *Johnny 99* is on the money, it's strange and powerful, quite unique. Cash may be as quirky as he is good, but when he's good, he's great. —PATRICK CARR



Terri Gibbs

Over Easy
MCA-5443

Terri Gibbs's burst on to the scene in 1980 with the smash hit, "Somebody's Knockin'," and then proceeded to gradually fade from sight again with a series of follow-up singles that slid soundlessly off the charts like millstones sinking into still waters, threatening to pull her career down into permanent oblivion with them.

In this regard, *Over Easy* could well be the career turnaround that Terri so desperately needs. In veteran Muscle Shoals producer Rick Hall, she seems to have found someone who understands how to showcase the intriguing dimensions and nuances of her sultry, evocative, "country blues" voice, which somehow tended to get either oversold or understated on her three previous albums.

Between Hall (whose previous production credits run the soul-to-country gamut, all the way from Aretha Franklin and Etta James to Jerry Reed and Mac Davis) and Terri (who lists George Jones and Aretha Franklin as two of her greatest and most abiding

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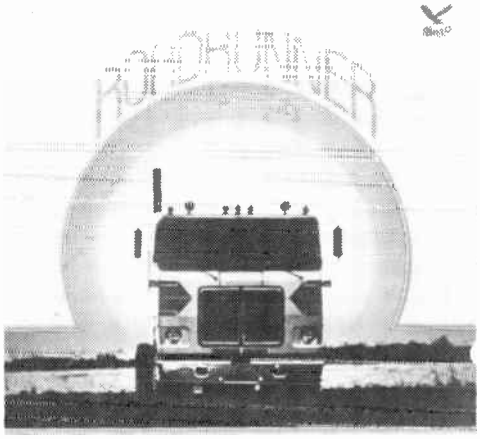

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musical influences), there is a shared aesthetic sensibility which is undoubtedly a key factor in the haunting country soulfulness that emanates so effectively from tracks like "Anybody Else's Heart But Mine," "I Can't Resist" (a spine-tingling Rodney Crowell composition), and "Tell Mama" (a soul "oldie" co-written by Clarence Carter).

Over Easy is a solid album, with carefully crafted and (at times) heavily layered arrangements, and extremely well chosen material. It should provide the commercial momentum to resurrect Terri's faltering career. It certainly deserves to. —BOB ALLEN

Bill Monroe

Bill Monroe & Friends
MCA-5435

Once upon a time, anybody suggesting the idea of Bill Monroe recording with a group of leading Nashville stars would have been carted off to Happy Valley for some R & R. True, Monroe appeared on bluegrass albums by Rose Maddox, Kenny Baker and Doc Watson in the past, but he declined to involve himself in the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's *Will The Circle Be Unbroken* with Jimmy Martin, Roy Acuff and Earl Scruggs. That was not surprising, considering his taciturn manner, formalized, rigid musical philosophies, and solid, almost prickly Kentucky conservatism.

But the last few years have softened Monroe, and in fact his records incorporated occasional electric instruments, keyboards and vibes as early as the Forties and Fifties. He'd also been singing informally with fellow Opry stars backstage for years. His first truly significant step towards the mainstream, however, came when he recorded with Tom T. Hall some years ago. He relaxed his musical fundamentalism still further on his exquisite 1981 album *Master of Bluegrass*, which featured his haunting, ethereal "My Last Days on Earth," a symphonic composition unrelated to any of his past work. And now?

The guest stars on *Bill Monroe & Friends* all had to adjust their styles somewhat, and their success varies considerably. Those familiar with bluegrass and harmonizing fare the best. "Blue Moon of Kentucky" with the Oaks is credible, yet even more impressive are the Gatlins, who give "Is the Blue Moon Still Shining" a razor-edged, haunting quality that surely must have pleased Bill. Ricky Skaggs joins him for a fleet, effortless version of "My Sweet Darling" and more than holds his own on their mandolin break. Emmylou Harris, appropriately enough, is featured on a delicate version of "Kentucky Waltz," a song with which she is clearly at home. And John Hartford's smoky voice merges well with Monroe's on "Old Riverman" (a Hartford-Monroe composition), preserving both their musical identities.

In some ways, however, the most interesting efforts are with those unaccustomed to singing high harmony. The effect is startling as Monroe duets with Johnny Cash on "I Still Miss Someone," the only non-Monroe tune on the album. Even more bizarre is his duet with Willie Nelson on the unconventional (for Monroe) "The Sunset Trail." Willie sings at the very top end of his register, but stays on pitch as their voices merge to create an almost playful effect. Poor Waylon, trying to stay up high with the Master, sings himself hoarse on "With Body And Soul," but together, their harmonies have a sinewy strength. Barbara Mandrell acquits herself adequately on "My Rose of Old Kentucky," and Mel Tillis is acceptable on "My Louisiana Love."

Sure, the showbiz opening dialogues that introduce each track could have been dumped; the album doesn't need such gimmickry. And while this album may be a minor flash in the greater body of Bill Monroe's work, it's nonetheless fun to experience Monroe, the Bluegrass Boys (and a few studio players) as he welcomes the cream of the mainstream into *his* milieu.

—RICH KIENZLE

EDITOR'S NOTE: I have a policy of not assigning myself record reviews. Believe me, it is a good policy, and I don't intend to violate it now. Occasionally, however, I am tempted. The release of *Bill Monroe & Friends* is one of those times.

What do you think of Bill Monroe sitting down for a little sing-song with Waylon? Waylon? Waylon *Jennings*? Or how about Willie? Or Johnny Cash? How can this be? Since 1948, probably at least once a day, Bill Monroe has told somebody or other that, more or less, the definition of "Bluegrass" is what Bill Monroe does, and vice versa. And that's that. He gets older, but nothing changes in his singing, his picking, or his style. Listen to a 1950 Bill Monroe record, then listen to a 1980 Bill Monroe record; both are great. Mr. Monroe does not recognize the concept of "going downhill." But neither does he recognize the concept of "change" in his style.

Then, in 1981, like a lightning bolt came *Master of Bluegrass* —the most bizarre, shocking, unexpected album of his career. It made the hair stand up on the back of your neck. It was wonderful, but what a shock! Had he thrown out all the rules?

On reflection, I don't think he had. He had just clarified the rules: Bluegrass is whatever Bill Monroe does, and *Bill Monroe can do any damn thing he wants to!*

With the release of *Bill Monroe & Friends*, we learn another wrinkle on the law: Bluegrass is whatever Bill Monroe does, and Bill Monroe can do any damn thing he wants to, and *he can do it with anyone he damn well choses to do it with!*

Well, maybe there's one exception. According to one of the people close to this project, Monroe tried to call Dolly Parton to invite her to be on the album, but she didn't call back. Now, if *anyone* should be on this record, it's Dolly. My advice to her is that she should call Mr. Monroe immediately and reserve the number one guest spot on *Bill Monroe & Friends, Volume II*. Once she hears this record, I'll bet she agrees.

Thanks for continuing the lessons, Bill.

—RUSS BARNARD

Moe Bandy

Devoted To Your Memory
Columbia FC 38726

Moe Bandy is in a tough position. Since he deserted the sheet metal business in 1974 to live his dream of being a country music singer, he's carved out a niche as a *for-real* country singer, a balladeer of the barrooms, the lost causes and love in vain. Songs like "Hank Williams, You Wrote My Life" and "Barstool Mountain" went a long way towards convincing the listening public that hardcore country music did not

begin with Willie Nelson and end with George Jones.

Unfortunately, *Devoted To Your Memory*, Bandy's fifteenth album, finds him trapped not in a barroom or a hopeless love affair, but in the all-too-common Nashville trap of gummy neo-Nashville Sound productions and dull, dull, *dull* love ballads. There are times when I think that the most influential experience for

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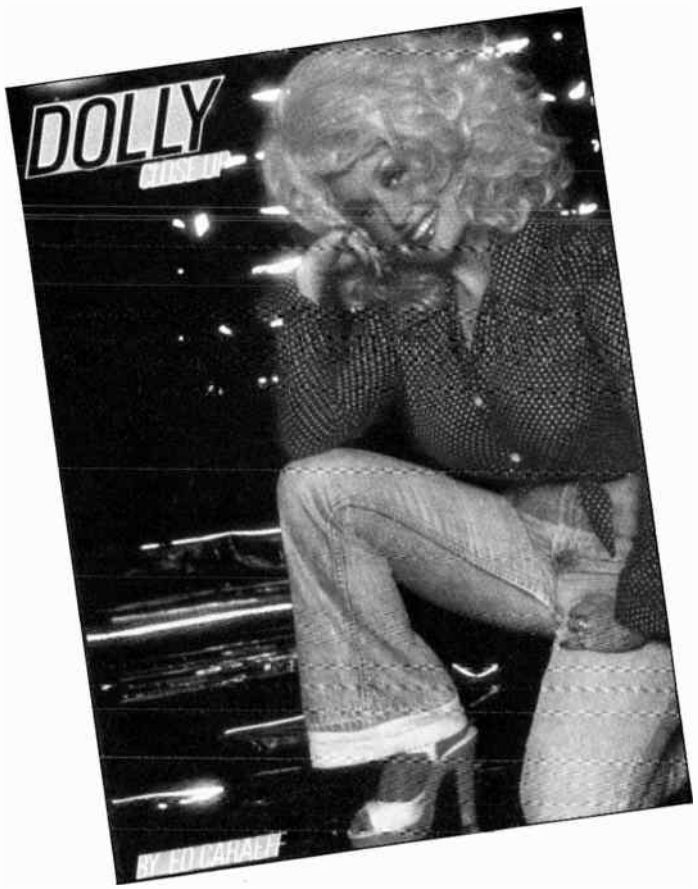

Here is probably the largest and most exciting archive of Dolly Parton photos in existence. What makes the photographs in this tribute especially unique is that they have never, or rarely, been displayed before. Each photograph was shot by Ed Caraeff, one of the outstanding album cover photographers of the seventies. All were created while shooting different album jackets during the period when Dolly transformed herself from a star with a strictly country following, to one of the most celebrated performers of today. If you are a Dolly fan, this is the one new book you should not be without.

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Record Reviews

about half the producers in Nashville was setting foot in their first elevator. *Ah*, they thought, hearing canned music for the first time, *I can make noise like that!*

I cannot believe that country fans don't want to hear a singer—especially a singer with as much vitality and sheer gut-twisting emotive ability as Moe Bandy—go for the wall, wring as much out of a song as possible. "Let's Get Over Them Together," for example, could have been a powerhouse. Bandy's voice works well with that of duet-mate Becky Hobbs, who sounds like a young Loretta Lynn, but just when the song gets interesting, Bandy seems to back off—*I'm just singing this, guys*, he seems to be saying, *it don't mean nothing.*

The song that works best is a duet with Merle Haggard on a Haggard-Leona Williams tune, "Don't Sing Me No Songs About Texas." For an obligatory Texas song *(Yee-haw! Whoopee!! Love it love it love it!!!)*, it's not bad, but it's nowhere near the "Hey Joe, Hey Moe" duet with Joe Stamply a few years back.

Anyway, not to pick on Moe Bandy, because he is truly one of country music's greats, but the essence of exciting music is risk. Unless you happen to be Willie Nelson, who could convincingly sing the Houston telephone book and sell a million copies, there are no free rides.

And besides, if every single string section in Nashville vanished tomorrow, country music would be the better for it.

—MICHAEL BANE

Tom T. Hall

Everything From Jesus To Jack Daniels
Mercury/Polygram
814 025-1 M1

Tom T. Hall is like Rod McKuen or Louis Lamour—or any number of other enduring popular writer/composers—in that he consistently seems to mine the same territory and come up with the same results.

Everything From Jesus To Jack Daniels marks Hall's realliance with Mercury Records and Jerry Kennedy, the team with which he kicked off his career in the late 1960s and with which he stayed until his untimely move to RCA in the mid-1970s. (Kennedy produced four tracks on this album; the other six were produced by Chet Atkins.)

On this new album—his first in several years, excluding *The Story Teller and the Banjo Man*, his spirited 1982 duet with Earl Scruggs—Tom T. Hall once again offers ten of the whiskey-soaked vignettes of everyday pathos and the irony-tinged cracker-barrel social commentaries for which he is best known. (I use the term "cracker-barrel" because Hall, no matter how deeply he contemplates the existential nature of things, tends to come up with the same solution: Have another drink and try to forget about it all.)

Some of the material on this album is surprisingly strong when measured against some of the rather lackluster compositions which found their way onto his later RCA albums. The title song, for instance, is one of the liveliest and most incisive commentaries he's written and recorded in years, while "The Letter" is such an honest, tightly written and emotionally detailed slice of musical pathos that you can't help wondering if it isn't an old gem he's unearthed from his most prolific and ambitious days as a songwriter, back in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Still, Hall does fall prey to the creative weaknesses that have overtaken him in recent years. He is not above taking a dip into the maudlin ("How'd You Get Home So Soon"), or diving head-first into bleary-eyed sentimentality ("Wasted, Borrowed Money"). Even when these pitfalls occur, however, the results, if not creatively overwhelming, are at least

endearing.

Most importantly, though, *Everything From Jesus to Jack Daniels* exudes a sense of musical vitality that has been missing from his solo albums for some time. This time out, it sounds as if he really wants to make good music, rather than simply clock in the studio time necessary to the fulfillment of his contractual obligations. And I, for one, am happy that the old "Story Teller" is back again—back with what sounds a lot like a renewed and healthy sense of purpose.

—BOB ALLEN

Gail Davies

What Can I Say
Warner Bros. 1-23972

Gail Davies wanted to be a jazz singer when she first started in music. She was influenced by Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holliday and was married to a jazz musician some time back. So it's not unusual that when she sings upbeat songs like "Halleujah, I Love Him So," the old Ray Charles number, and "Boys Like You," another mover, she has the power and conviction to shake it up with the masters.

If there is one theme throughout the album, it would have to be Gail's observation that men will be boys. Two of the cuts on *What Can I Say*—"The Boy In You Is Showing," and the aforementioned "Boys Like You"— may have similar titles, but they are totally different in flavor: "The Boy In You Is Showing" is a moving ballad that portrays the two sides to every man (Gail's not too happy with the child part), while "Boys Like You" takes a hard stab at immature men who still act like teenagers when it comes to love (and Gail's not gonna take it).

The material on this album is not unlike what you would expect to find on a Rosanne Cash album. Like Rosanne, Gail is one of the few women in country music who is challenging the woman's role as victim, and pushing full steam ahead, singing songs with more aggression and self-assurance than ever before.

"Following You Around" may suggest a whimpering female, but when Gail sings it, it's a demand. "You're A Hard Dog To Keep Under The Porch,"

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Record Reviews

the single from the album, written by Harlan Howard and Susanna Clark, lets her man know that even though she may stand for his wanderings, she doesn't have to like it. The title track, written by Gail, is a mixture of resignation and remorse, and "It's You Alone" (written by Gail's brother Ron Davies) is a beautiful tune on which Gail shares sweet harmonies with Walker Ingleheart and Jack Sundrud. The production of the album is crisp and clear, as are the arrangements. Check out the strings on Rodney Crowell's "On A Real Good Night."

It seems that Gail is more comfortable with uptempo songs than ballads. Could be shades of her jazz past. But from a lady who produces her own albums (one of the very few), shares thoughts about standing up to her man, and is attempting songs usually reserved for men. *What Can I Say* is a very fine album. More power to her.

—ROCHELLE FRIEDMAN

The Kendalls

Movin' Train
Mercury 812-779-1 M-1

With the passage of time, the Kendalls have become more and more Jeannie's show. At this point, you can hear Royce only on the faintest of harmonies. Jeannie's voice and phrasing are nothing to complain about, of course—she neatly stakes out the middle ground between Emmylou Harris and Dolly Parton—and she has always dominated the group, but their records seemed to have a little more character, not to mention texture, back when Royce got more exposure.

That change has been gradual. Now comes a much more dramatic shift: There is not a single out-and-out cheating song on *Movin' Train*. Again, there's no point in complaining about that alone—if the Kendalls are tired of cheating songs, so be it—but if they're going to be effective without them, they'll have to come up with better material than the songs on this album. "Heaven's Just a Sin Away" and "Pittsburgh Stealers" were not great songs because they were racy cheating songs—they were great because they were such *original* cheating songs. They took a unique image or idea

and developed it; nobody else had songs even remotely like them.

When the most striking image on *Movin' Train* is "Flaming Eyes" (written by Jeannie), you know you're in trouble. That image is a sharp variation on a familiar theme, but the rest of the songs feature your basic boat-upon-the-water and leaf-on-the-breeze ("Precious Love"), your crying-like-a-willow ("I'll Be Faithful to You"), your radio-as-the-tie-that-binds ("Thank God for the Radio"), your rushing-minutes and moonlight-shining-across-the-lonely-hill ("My Baby's Gone"), and your early-frost, mist-on-the-hill, and chill-in-the-heart ("Wildwood Flower"). We've heard all this stuff too many times before; these are cliches the singer can never transcend.

This album has four producers. Fortunately, none push the sound to the middle-of-the-road nearly as much as the lyrics suggest. Strings are minimal, and there's plenty of fiddle and steel. But four producers for ten songs? That confirms just how much a transitional album this is; reserve judgment on the Kendalls' new direction until they've had more time to work it out.

—JOHN MORTHLAND

Earl Thomas Conley

Don't Make It Easy For Me
RCA ALH1-4713

With each album, Earl Thomas Conley gets a little looser and more self-confident. His smoky, dusky voice handles most of the cuts on *Don't Make It Easy For Me* with effortless grace.

As a songwriter, Conley has a winning partnership going here with Earl Scruggs's talented son Randy. Five of the ten songs on this record are Conley/Scruggs collaborations, including the first single hit, "Your Love's On The Line." Scruggs fills in with lead guitar and mandolin tracks, but it's Conley's vocals that carry the show.

A couple of older songs from Conley's portfolio as a solo writer make their way onto this record, with dedications to his family. Though probably not destined for single treatment, "Home So Fine" and "Crowd Around the Corner" are revealing glimpses of the singer's past life and personal preferences. The latter tune is a particularly fine portrait of the codgers who haunt the courthouse square of every little Southern county seat: "It's an old man's right to

spend his life/ just searchin' for a place/ where he can sit and watch the sun go down."

It's damn good poetic imagery, and damn honest country music.

—BOB MILLARD

Bobby Braddock

Hardpore Cornography
RCA MHL 1-8604

This cheapo "mini-album" contains six songs by the man best known for having written "He Stopped Loving Her Today" and dozens of other country hits. All six are what you might call "novelty songs." At the beginning of "Avalanche of Romance," Braddock explains that he and co-writer Rafe VanHoy, after a night of drinking, decided to try writing the worst song in the world. "Avalanche of Romance," which compares love to various natural disasters and sports an appropriately old-timey mandolin break and off-key choral singing, is indeed a *bona fide* stinker. But I have a question for Bobby Braddock: if this is the worst song ever, how does he describe the others?

I'm talking about cuts like "The Elderly Brothers," a take-off on an over-the-hill rock and roll vocal duo that creaks along on an arthritic Fifties chord progression. I'm talking about "Dolly Parton's Hits," the subject of which I had already figured out before I even broke the shrink-wrap on the album. But most of all, I'm talking about "I Lobster but I Never Flounder," in which Braddock describes his lost love affair with such lines as "She was the bass I ever had/Now my life has no porpoise," or the immortal "I can still hear her say/'Not tonight, dear, I have a haddock.'"

It's bad enough that he looks a little like Charlie Manson, but now *this*, too. He should be locked up. I'm not sure whether he should be locked up in a mental hospital or back in another recording studio, but he should definitely be locked up.

—JOHN MORTHLAND

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Buried Treasures

Re-issues, Rarities, and the Hard-to-Find

by Rich Kienzle

Although honky tonk music has been around for several decades now, nobody has ever made a serious effort to trace the entire idiom from its Texas roots through the lean years that followed Elvis to its revival and renewal in the early Seventies. Time-Life's *Honky-Tonkin'* (TLCW-12) takes a superlative stab at doing just that with forty of the best, most representative songs of the idiom .

They begin, logically enough, with Al Dexter's 1936 recording of "Honky Tonk Blues" (*not* the Hank Williams tune), a rollicking number which pretty well defined the exuberant aspect of the idiom, as did Dexter's 1942 "Pistol Packin' Mama." Rex Griffin's original 1937 recording of "The Last Letter" remains a performance of sensitive, singular beauty. The Forties, too, are represented by essential material, including Ted Daffan's classic "Born to Lose," Ernest Tubb's 1941 original, "Walking The Floor Over You," Floyd Tillman's "I Gotta Have My Baby Back," Bob Wills's "Bubbles in My Beer," and Tubb's devastatingly sorrowful 1949 rendering of "Warm Red Wine," perhaps the greatest performance of that great song.

It is, however, the Golden Era of the 1950s that gets maximum scrutiny. An entire side of Lefty Frizzell material mixes predictable numbers like "If You've Got The Money, I've Got The Time," the moving "I Never Go Around Mirrors," and "Honky Tonk Stardust Cowboy" with the obscure, autobiographical "Just Can't Live That Fast (Any More)" and three outstanding, previously unissued tracks from Columbia Records.

Hank, Sr.'s "They'll Never Take Her Love From Me," Hank Thompson's "Wild Side of Life," Webb Pierce's searing "There Stands The Glass," "Crazy Arms" by Ray Price, and "Pick Me Up On Your Way Down" by Charlie Walker, all classics, are included with lesser-known tracks like bluegrasser Buzz Busby's 1955 "Just Me and the Jukebox," an excellent non-hit. Other surprises are Waylon's version of "Burning Memories," recorded in 1964 when he was still working in Phoenix, and Jean Shepard's acerbic "Many Happy Hangovers To You" from 1965, when the music was unfashionable and the Nashville Sound held sway. The Seventies are well represented by Mel Tillis's magnificent shuffle, "Heart Over Mind," and Hank, Jr.'s rhythm-and-blues flavored "I've Got A Right To Cry" and brilliant "Stoned at the Jukebox." Mel Street's "Borrowed Angel" (from 1971), Moe Bandy's "Hank Williams, You Wrote My Life," and Gene Watson's 1978 "Farewell Party" round the collection out nicely.

Apart from making all this material available in one package, the set, supported by a fine booklet written by Bill C. Malone, illustrates some important points. Firstly, the themes of roaring, romance, booze and misery changed minimally over the years, though the subject matter became more explicit as society at large loosened up. Secondly, the music itself evolved only slightly, the major changes being the addition of drums and electric guitars. My only complaint about the package, in fact, concerns this evolution: Instead of ordering the songs chronologically, the packagers grouped songs by the same artist together, even though in some cases the songs were recorded years apart.

Pee Wee King has always sounded a bit too syrupy to my ears. Although he worked in the Western Swing idiom, he didn't run a dance band, as Bob Wills did; generally, he played concerts and radio, less lively forums than the dancehall. Still, King and his Golden West Cowboys—when they wanted to—could rock the plaster off the walls, and *Ballroom King* (Detour 33-001), a British reissue of sixteen RCA Victor tracks from 1947 to 1956, is a startling look at his wilder side. Frankly, this sounds nothing like the Golden West Cowboys we're used to as the group crashes through songs like 1947's "Ten Gallon Boogie," a number which displays a rockabilly finesse in gear while Elvis was still in junior high. There are bizarre but entertaining moments as veteran King vocalist/fiddler Redd Stewart croons a surprisingly effective version of Lavern Baker's "Tweedlee Dee," while "Half a Dozen Boogie" and "Bull Fiddle Boogie" have a drive which nobody—not even Wills at his best—ever equalled. King recorded plenty of weak material in his time, but you'll find nary a bit of it here.

Every country music fan is familiar with Johnny Cash's Folsom Prison and San Quentin albums, but there is a third live prison album of which all but the very hardest hardcore Cashphiles are unaware. It was recorded in the early Seventies in Sweden's Osteraker Prison, and was previously available only in Sweden. Now, the German Bear Family label has reissued it as *Inside A Swedish Prison* (BFX 15092). The audience is nowhere near as rowdy as the inmates on the American prison records—a fact very probably attributable to the language barrier—and the material is a mix of a few favorites ("Me and Bobby McGee," "The Prisoner's Song") and a majority of lesser-known numbers. These include Cash's muckracking prison protest number, "Jacob Green," and the unusual spoken prison poem, "The Invertebrates." Cash's rendering of his own talking blues, "City Jail," is ebullient and hilarious. The band, the

Tennessee Three plus Carl Perkins and Larry Butler, is more restrained than usual, but for the Cash fan, this album is essential for its music— and for the chance to hear J.R. struggle to introduce his songs in Swedish.

The Texas country music scene of the Fifties and Sixties had its share of names who became legend: Willie Nelson, George Jones, Ray Price, etc. *Twenty Great Country Recordings of the 50's and 60's* (Cascade DROP 1004) brings together an engaging mix of the well-known and the obscure. Willie's 1959 "What A Way to Live" and "Man With the Blues," his first commercial recordings, are both included, as are George Jones's Starday versions of the Hank Williams-styled "Never Been So Weary" and his searing performance of the arcane gospel tune, "Cup of Loneliness." Claude Gray's long-unavailable 1960 recording of Willie's "Family Bible" was the first Nelson-penned hit (though he'd sold the song before Gray cut it), and Margie Ward's "I Shot Sam" was an answer to George Jones's "Who Shot Sam?" The other artists, all obscure, are nonetheless engaging, and the entire set is a rare bargain. ■

The Essential Collector

The Editors' Guide to Classic Country Albums

Willie Nelson

Phases And Stages
Atco 7291

As John Morthland wrote in our Tenth Anniversary Issue, "Yes, I know that *Red Headed Stranger* was the real Texas music breakthrough, and *Stardust* was the real American music breakthrough. But like the former, this album is about broken dreams and starting over; like the latter,

it's about learning to get the most out of small pleasures... With a lean Muscle Shoals band playing Symphony-Sid-meets-Floyd-Tillman arrangements, it's the most musically diverse album Willie's ever cut. Shouldn't all that count for a lot?" It should indeed. As Patrick Carr put it, "The album is Willie's masterpiece."

Elvis Presley

The Sun Sessions
RCA APM1-1675

For more than twenty years, as Elvis Presley seemed to travel further and further away from the passionate, half-mad music which made

his name, collectors searched the world over for unsullied copies of his original Sun records. Then, in the late Seventies, RCA released *The Sun Sessions*. Here, in one album, was the un-remixed history of Elvis's sixteen-month tenure at Sun, from the July 6th, 1954 cut of "That's All Right" on. Michael Bane noted that "this is some of the most powerful and most vital music ever made...Anyone with even a passing interest in either country or rock should have a copy of *The Sun Sessions* just to listen to once in a while, to remember what the real stuff was like."

Jimmie Rodgers

My Rough and Rowdy Ways
RCA ANL1-12096

The music of Jimmie Rodgers is an essential part of any country record collection; the man was, after all, the first true "country star." Of the many collections of his songs on the market, *My Rough and Rowdy Ways* is probably the one to have. It includes "Jimmie Rodgers' Last Blue Yodel," "Mississippi Moon," "My Rough and Rowdy Ways," "Blue Yodel No. 9," "My Blue Eyed Jane," "The One Rose," "Southern Cannonball," "Long Tall Mama Blues," "In The Jailhouse Now No. 2," "Peach Picking Time Down in Georgia," "Blue Yodel No. 1," "Travellin' Blues," "Mule Skinner Blues," "My Carolina Sunshine Girl," "The Brakeman's Blues," and "Away Out on the Mountain."

Dolly Parton

Coat Of Many Colors
RCA AHL1-4603

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Joe Ely

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DeFord Bailey, 1899-1982

by Rich Kienzle

The true veterans of the Grand Ole Opry continued to shrink in number through 1982. Aside from Marty Robbins's death, 1982 saw the loss of the legendary harmonica player DeFord Bailey, one of the Opry's true originals—and its first black star. Bailey died on July 1, 1982 of kidney failure and heart congestion at the age of 83.

It was Bailey whose virtuoso harmonica, manifested in his famous "Pan American Blues," introduced the first Grand Ole Opry performance under that name on December 10, 1927. His star rose through those broadcasts, and Charles Wolfe, an authority on the show's early days, discovered that Bailey was one of the most prominently featured of all the Opry regulars of the period. It wasn't at all uncommon for DeFord to appear for two or even three sets in a single Saturday night show. In 1928 he performed on 48 of the 52 weekly broadcasts.

That in itself would be sufficient cause to note Bailey's passing, but it wouldn't tell the entire story. He was also among the first artists to record in the first recording sessions held in Nashville in 1928, when he recorded eight songs for RCA Victor.

Bailey was significant in yet another way. It was he who was one of the vital links between pre-blues country dance music played by blacks and the blues sounds that emerged in the early part of the century. Born near Rome, Tennessee, several dozen miles east of Nashville, his grandfather, father and uncle were all superb hoedown fiddlers. Born with an acutely sensitive ear, he picked up harmonica at an early age and was able to mimic train sounds with deadly accuracy as well as other, rural sounds such as farm animals. But he had a relatively tough row to hoe; as a child he was a victim of polio, which left him stooped and limping for the remainder of his life.

Before coming to WSM under the auspices of pioneer Opry performer/physician Dr. Humphrey Bate, he'd done some performing on another Nashville station, and knocked everyone, including Opry founder George D. Hay, for the proverbial loop. As he became a member of the early Opry family, Bailey inspired great loyalty, even among white performers, which was somewhat surprising, considering the region and the time.

COURTESY CHARLES WOLFE

According to Charles Wolfe's excellent chapter on banjoist Uncle Dave Macon in the book *Stars of Country Music*, Macon became close to Bailey during Opry-related tours and even refused to stay in hotels that were segregated and wouldn't rent Bailey a room. On other occasions Macon passed DeFord off as his valet and got him accommodations.

Bailey had similar problems on the road even while Victor was selling his records in their "hillbilly" category. Bill Monroe, talking to Jim Rooney in the book *Bossmen*, recalled, "(DeFord) made many a mile with me. We rode together right in the back seat. Lots of times we would have trouble getting him lodgings. We'd walk the streets together, two, three o'clock in the morning, nobody out, in the roughest parts of town we'd be down there getting him a place to stay. We wore riding pants and hats in them days, and I suppose they thought we was the law and nobody would ever bother us. Then he would get in the room and lock the door and stay there until I went to get him the next day."

It was sadly inevitable that Bailey's race would ultimately get in the way. He was an integral part of the performing end of the Opry, but by the late Thirties, management started cutting down his time. In 1941 he finally got the gate, ostensibly because, according to George D. Hay, "he knew about a dozen numbers . . . but refused to learn any more." If that doesn't make sense, Bailey never quite figured it out, either. The contempt and haughtiness with which Hay made that judgment is clear.

So until 1971 Bailey concentrated on the shoeshine booth he'd operated since 1933 in Nashville, but his powers on the harmonica never diminished. He played for people over the years and amazed them with his sheer power on the instrument. In 1974 he blew away an audience at an Opry "old-timers" show and performed again at the Opry's new location in 1974. There was always a muted bitterness. Nothing malicious, but he refused to record again.

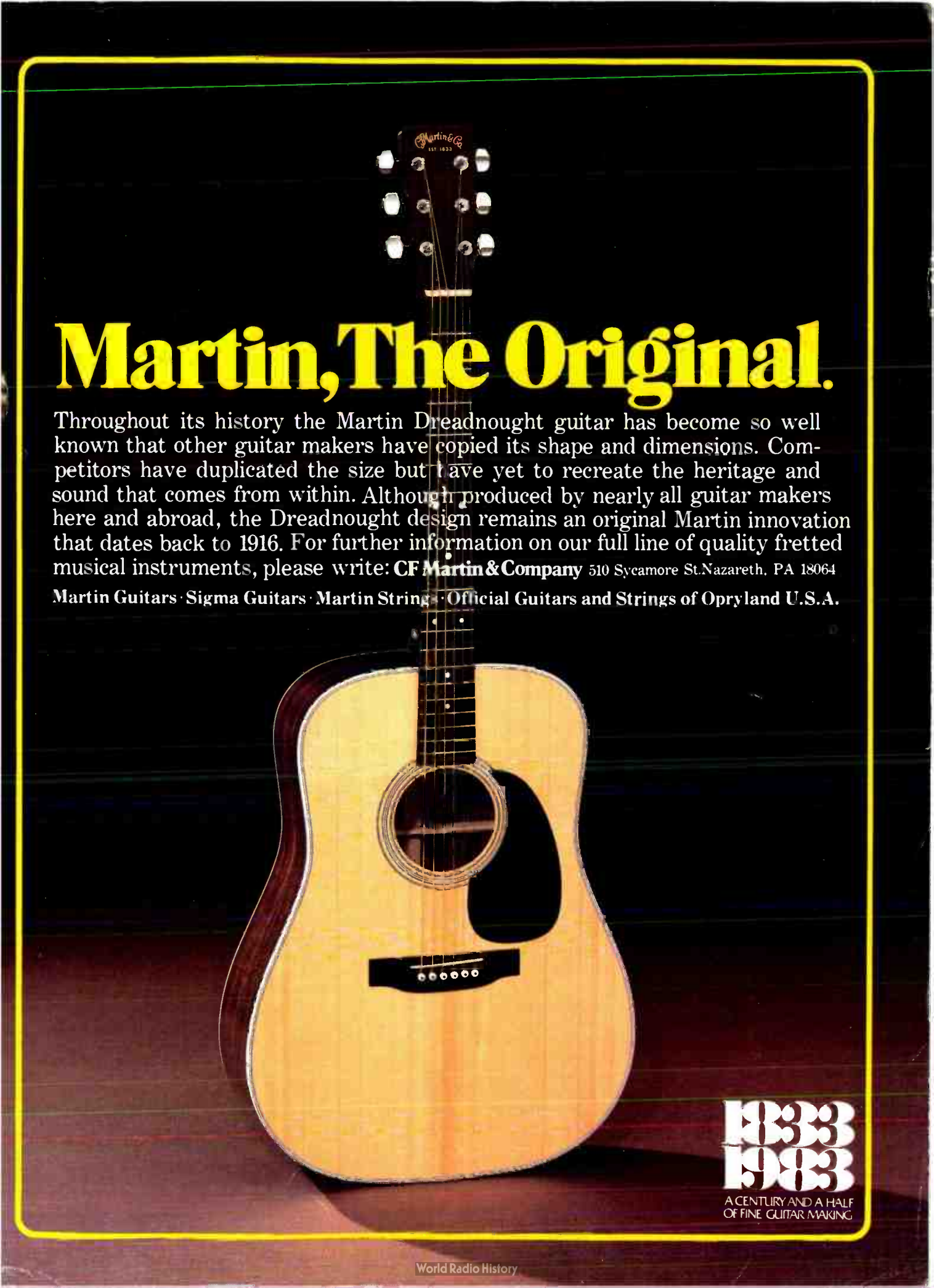
In April of 1982, at another Opry reunion show, Bailey again stunned the audience and drew a massive ovation.

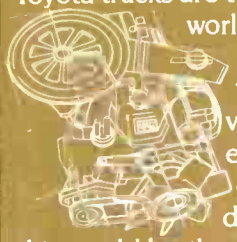
It is sad to note that even after he died, he remained a controversy. It was rekindled when Roy Acuff was quoted in the *New York Times* as praising Bailey, but added that he did not rate a spot in the Country Music Hall of Fame. Bailey admirers, including Minnie Pearl and Humphrey Bate's daughter Alcyon Beasley, took issue. Hall of Fame member Acuff's response was that Bailey's contributions were fine, but ultimately limited, and did nothing to further country music as a whole. Surprisingly, a few scholars—among them admirers of Bailey—agreed.

Yet Minnie Pearl, who serves on the Hall of Fame nominating committee, stated her intention to nominate Bailey if the opportunity arose. And Acuff admitted that he would vote for Bailey if he were nominated because, as he told the *Times*, "I think he's just as deserving as some who are already in there."

So what's left in the end? A sensitive man who was to a great extent a victim of the times, whose world was shattered and seemed to freeze around him. As Peter Guralnick explained in *Lost Highway*, "In some ways (Bailey) continues to see himself as a star; he carries himself like a star."

His unhappiness was masked by a flawless dignity, and now that he is gone his legacy of music, his achievements, and that dignity remain, whether or not his countenance ever graces a plaque in the Hall of Fame. ■





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